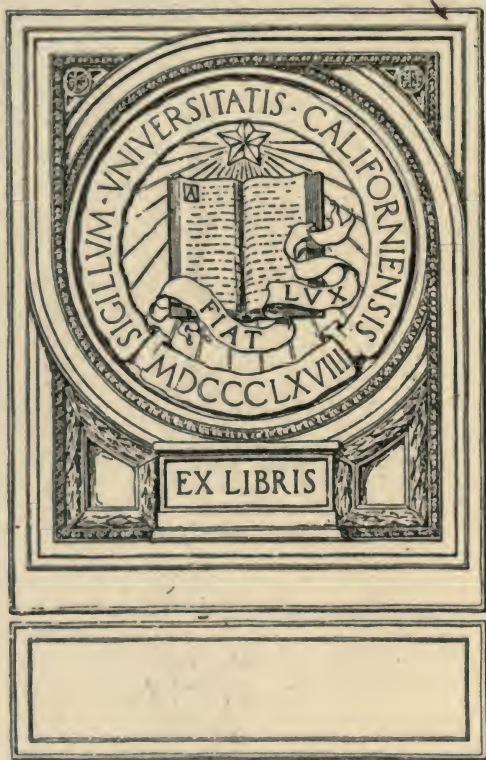
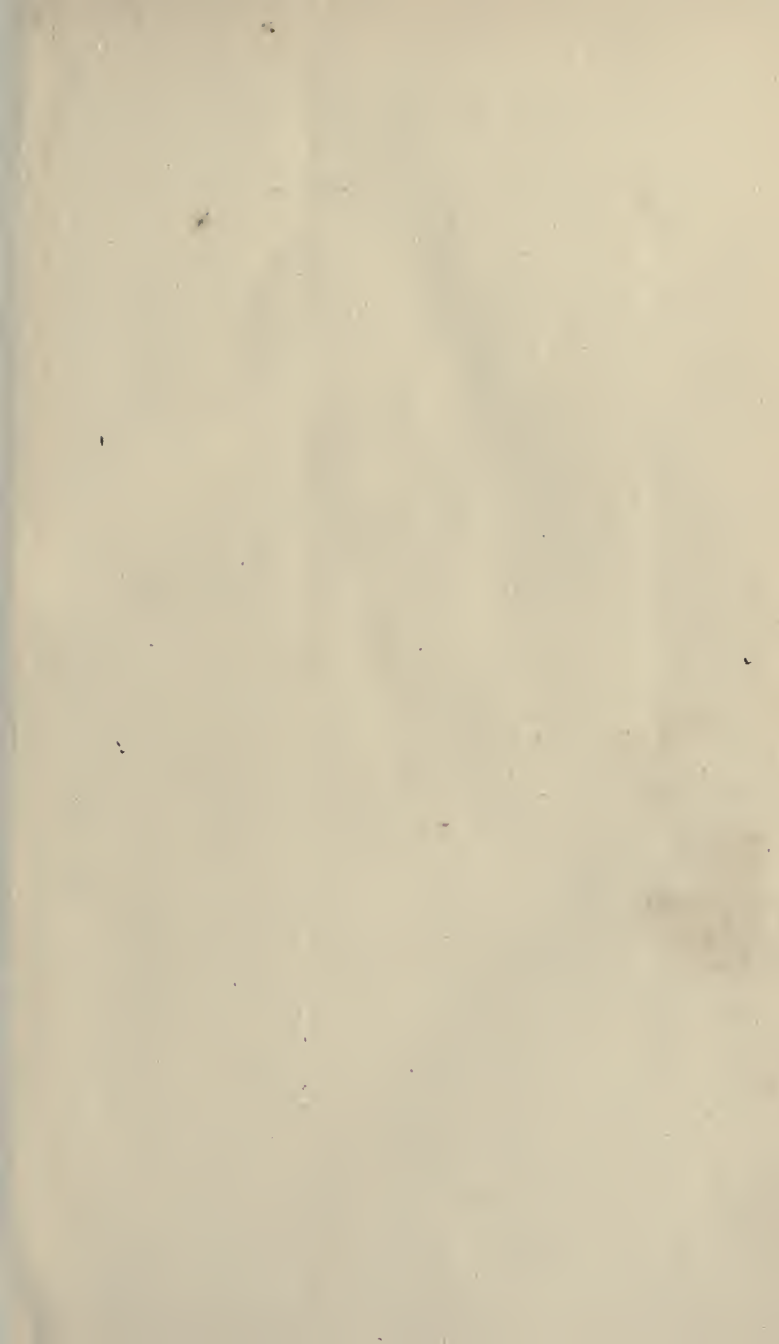


SECRETS OF SUCCESS IN WAR

EDMUND DANE







Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

SECRETS OF SUCCESS IN WAR

HOW MODERN ARMIES ORGANISE
TRAIN AND FIGHT

A COMPARISON OF THE BRITISH
AND GERMAN SYSTEMS

BASED ON THE "LETTERS" OF
PRINCE KRAFT ZU HOHENLOHE
INGELFINGEN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND CRITICAL COMMENTARY BY
EDMUND DANE

11



LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON AND
EDWARD STANFORD, LIMITED
MCMXIV

U102
D3

TO THE
AMERICAN

PREFACE

WHAT is a modern army ? How is it organised ? How trained ? In what manner does it go to work ? In what lies its strength or its weakness ? What should be expected from it ?

This book gives, in popular form, an answer to those questions. It does not aim at describing in detail the life led by "Kitchener's recruits." Its purpose is to point out the broad principles which underlie modern military strength, efficiency, and success, and incidentally the mistakes which are responsible for military weakness, inefficiency, and failure.

These principles are, in substance, not new, but military science, while on the surface much the same, has during the past generation been so profoundly changed, that the training and organisation of the modern army has in many respects as compared with, say, forty years ago, altered hardly less completely.

PREFACE

Nearly all books on military subjects and on war, including the well-known works of General von Bernhardi, assume a knowledge which in this country at all events the general reader does not as a rule possess, though it is quite safe to proceed upon such an assumption in Germany, where most men have passed through the Army. Without such a knowledge of the underlying principles of military organisation and efficiency it is neither easy to form a sound judgment nor to understand why, for instance, General von Bernhardi's expectations of the German military system and policy have not been fulfilled.

For the purpose of inquiry' into principles in their present-day application it is plainly not enough to take as an example any one military system. But it happens that there are in modern Europe two military systems, which, though of necessity presenting many features in common, yet respectively and most completely embody the effects one of the professional principle, and the other of the principle of universal and compulsory military service.

On one or another of these foundations a modern army must be built. The two representative systems are the British and the German. In short, the British and the German Armies form quite distinct military types.

Comparison between them is not here presented for the purpose of raising any tiresome and barren controversy. It is offered in order that the reader, having the principles in his mind, and the answers to the questions before him, and able to estimate the elements of true military strength, as well as, in outline, the science of their employment, may be in a position to follow military operations with greater interest and intelligence; to read official war news with understanding; and to give unofficial war news its due weight, or want of weight. In place of a nebulous, and sometimes quite distorted, notion of what a modern army is and what it does, he will, it is hoped, gather from these pages a clear conception, so that he will neither expect the impossible nor believe the unbelievable.

Since it has been realised that the profession

of arms may stand between a nation and political or even commercial ruin, that profession, from being in some respects looked down upon, has come to excite a lively interest, and probably the average reader is ready to be told that the difference which divides an army from a mere mass of men, however brave, is as wide as the poles are asunder. The calling of a soldier, even of a soldier of the rank and file, is a skilled employment. The leadership of armies demands intellect of the highest order, rising in great soldiers to that combination of intellect with powerful character which constitutes genius.

Use has been made, as regards the German Army, of Prince Kraft zu Hohenlohe Ingelfingen's "Letters on Cavalry," "Letters on Infantry," and "Letters on Artillery," all published by Messrs. Edward Stanford Ltd. These letters, well known in this country through the excellent translations of Lieut.-Colonel N. L. Walford, R.A., embody the opinions of an able soldier. While an admirer of the German system, Prince Kraft was also its outspoken critic.

Recent experience has fully established the general soundness of his criticisms and conclusions. Not a few of the reforms he advocated were adopted. Others, unfortunately for the German Army, were not.

How far the difference in the bases and traditions of the British and the German Armies has affected their spirit, their training, their tactics, and their respective values in the operations of war will by this comparison be made plain.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	7

CHAPTER I

THE GROUND PLAN OF A MODERN ARMY . . .	17
--	----

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION OF THE MODERN "UNIT" . . .	30
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III

SHAPING OUT THE MODERN SOLDIER . . .	44
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV

NECESSITY OF INDIVIDUAL TRAINING . . .	56
--	----

CHAPTER V

SKILL WITH THE BAYONET	72
----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI

MARKSMANSHIP AND FIELD WORK	PAGE 79
-------------------------------------	------------

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TRADITION	98
--	----

CHAPTER VIII

TYRANNY OF THEORY <i>v.</i> POWER OF PRACTICE . .	117
---	-----

CHAPTER IX

THE INFLUENCE OF OFFICERS	134
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER X

THE REGIMENT UP TO DATE	156
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI

THE MODERN ARMY IN WAR	177
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII

TURNING MOVEMENTS: HOW THEY ARE MADE AND MET	194
---	-----

CONTENTS

15

CHAPTER XIII

	PAGE
THE GERMAN REVIVAL OF MASS ATTACKS . . .	209

CHAPTER XIV

INFLUENCE OF MODERN ARMS ON TACTICS . . .	221
---	-----

CHAPTER XV

THE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS IN WAR . . .	247
--------------------------------------	-----



CHAPTER I

THE GROUND PLAN OF A MODERN ARMY

THE first necessity in forming a clear idea of a modern army is to grasp in outline what may be called its architecture.

The basis of such an army is its "units." Just as stones are formed of particles, so a "unit" is made up of men. Often regiments are spoken of as "units." Indeed in a loose and general way "regiment" and "unit" are used as convertible terms. Strictly, however, the unit of infantry is a battalion; of cavalry a squadron; of artillery a battery; and of engineers a company.

The "unit" is so called because the idea is to train all the men forming it to act as one man; to give these individuals, each relatively feeble, the strength, through cohesion and concerted action, of a giant, but of a giant with many brains, many pairs of eyes, ears, and hands, all obedient, nevertheless, to the same directing impulse.

18 PLAN OF A MODERN ARMY

When, therefore, we think of an army we have first to think of it as a combination of these giants artificially created by discipline and training.

That of course is only the foundation. All the same upon the firmness of this foundation, that is upon the discipline and training of the units, and upon the extent to which they are units in fact as well as in form, the value of an army as an instrument mainly depends.

But the combination of the units to operate one with another for a common purpose is as important as the concerted action which creates the unit. This combination of units is so designed as to give not only mutual support but flexibility. The combination in turn forms an organic mass ; but the organic mass, called in military phraseology a "division," is a mass made up of links. While tenacious it must not be rigid. The units of the organic mass have to be strong, but the joints have to be flexible.

The units or artificial giants which make up the mass, however, are not all of one kind. If the mass were formed wholly of battalions of infantry linking up would be comparatively simple. But the mass is made up of units of the several "Arms" and "Services," and of these

different kinds of units each kind fulfils as part of the mass a distinctive kind of function.

The "Arms" are the infantry, artillery, and cavalry; the "Services" are the engineers, the army service corps, the army medical corps and not least the staff. The training of the units forming the several Arms and Services presents of necessity important distinctions. When organic masses are thus made up they are combined into a chain of such masses. That chain of organic masses constitutes an army.

At first sight the organic masses forming a modern army may appear complex. Their plan may nevertheless be an outline readily stated. Taking infantry first, we find men trained to act together as battalions, battalions trained to act together as regiments¹; regiments to act together as brigades; brigades to act together as divisions; and divisions paired to act together as an army corps. We have thus a scheme in which twenty-four battalions of infantry may be organically combined.

Similarly squadrons of cavalry form regiments, regiments brigades, and brigades divisions; and

¹ This is the continental plan. In the British Army at the present time the brigades are formed directly of battalions.

batteries of artillery form (on the Continent) regiments, and regiments brigades.¹

The feature which marks the organic masses in modern armies is that each division is itself an army capable, if need be, of operating separately from other divisions.

For the purposes then of field operations what a general has at his disposal are these potentially independent divisions, commonly working together in pairs as army corps. Usually three, but sometimes four, army corps are grouped together for a particular scheme of operations. They are then collectively spoken of as an army in the military sense of the word.

But the plan of linking up cannot be fully understood without at least some elementary idea of the relationship of the different "Arms" to each other, and of the "Services" to the "Arms."

¹ The whole artillery of the British Army constitutes technically one huge regiment known as the "Royal Regiment of Artillery." It is divided into batteries, and then again into batteries of field artillery, batteries of garrison artillery, and batteries of horse artillery. Batteries of field and horse artillery are grouped into brigades, and an artillery brigade is associated with each division of infantry. The British system recognises the destructive character of the artillery as a technical and scientific Arm, while the constitution of batteries as effective units undoubtedly contributes to a high level of technical skill.

The main body of an army is its infantry. To operate independently, however, a division of infantry needs artillery, which is not only an apparatus of attack, but a shield. It also needs cavalry, the eye and ear of the force, and at the present day it must have the services of aviators. Further, since in warlike operations there are always natural or artificial obstacles to be dealt with, it requires the services of engineers. Again, it could not get on without a body of the Army Service Corps, which may be called the stomach of the force ; nor without a body of the Army Medical Corps.

In the mass schemes of modern armies, therefore, there is attached to each division a proportion of artillery and cavalry sufficient to give the infantry, as the main body, this power of potentially independent action. But separate and supplemental cavalry divisions and artillery brigades are also formed to operate in support of any one or more of the divisions, or army corps, as the general in command of the group of army corps may direct.

While consequently each division consists of a combination of units of the several "Arms," and "Services," compact yet elastic, the finished instrument with which the general of an

army has to work are the divisions, or paired divisions, plus the supplemental divisions of cavalry and brigades of artillery.

Such briefly is the general ground plan of a modern army as formed to take the field. One or two short observations on the evolution of the plan will further elucidate its aims.

The rudiments of it date from the eighteenth century. Division of regiments into the more compact battalions, and the grouping at the same time of regiments into brigades and divisions, originated with the great French general Turenne. The idea of linking divisions into organic pairs to form an army corps was developed by Napoleon. It gave greater momentum in attack.

The use of separate divisions of cavalry on account of the shock arising from masses of horsemen was first thought of by Frederick the Great, who originated too the device of employing horse artillery to act with the cavalry.

It has been in the direction of completing this ground plan that modern armies are mainly marked off from those of former times. In earlier armies the commissariat arrangements were by comparison rudimentary. The soldier's lot was one of hardships. In the modern army

the transport and supply of both food and munitions, accoutrements, and other necessities is the business of a highly organised service—the Army Service Corps—comprising not only the field cooks, field bakers, and encampment and transport columns, but the men of many skilled trades engaged on replacements and repairs. The saddlers, tailors, boot-makers, wheelwrights, and others who accompany an army are essential to its continued fitness.

Similarly the Army Medical Corps, organised into ambulance, field hospital, stationary hospital, and sanitation staffs, fulfils a most important function. Attending to the wounded is only part of its work. The Corps has the duty of saving life by the prevention of disease. In former times disease melted armies as the sun melts snow.

Again, the advance of engineering science has made the Corps of Engineers more than ever essential to successful and rapid operations. Modern war is as much a series of engineering problems as of problems in field tactics. While armies in former times depended for movement on roads, modern armies are dependent not merely on roads, but on railways, telegraphs, and telephones.

Finally the telegraph, the telephone, and aviation have between them changed altogether the work of the Staff. Always important, its business has become vital, and upon its activity, reliability, and promptitude in no small degree depend the success or failure of the operations undertaken.

The Staff is in fact the brain of the force, and the various subordinate staff groups representing the commands of its army corps, divisions, brigades, and service bodies form its nerve centres. Nothing is more striking in modern armies and modern war than the development of this organisation of brain. Numbered as they are by millions, modern armies would without such Staff schemes be helpless. Warlike operations would speedily become a huge and hopeless muddle. Intellect and science were never more decisive in war than now.

Formerly in peace times this part of the organisation remained rudimentary. On the outbreak of hostilities the brain of the Army was more or less hastily improvised into completeness. Its efficiency or deficiency had to be tested by actual experience in the field, and often enough owing to bad or hasty appointments made by

influence rather than by merit, deficiency turned out to be its "leading" feature. That, with imperfectly organised Services into the bargain, is enough to wreck any campaign.

The value of a complete and thoroughly tested Staff was first realised by Frederick the Great. The chief inventor of the system, however, was the first Napoleon. It was on the rock of a deficient Staff that Napoleon the Third came to grief. In the modern army the Staff is a standing and elaborate organisation into which, in theory at any rate, the best brains of each Arm and Service are presumed to find their way. Woe to the army in which they do not.

In the British Army, as it existed on what may now be called the old footing, the usage was to scrape together the elements forming a division and send them out to learn in the school of experience. Then by degrees standing divisions were formed. Latterly the working efficiency of these divisions has been subjected to frequent and periodic tests in field operations.

Before, however, that could be done the War Office itself had to be overhauled and its improvising functions abolished. The public at large have very little idea of the changes carried

out during the last fifteen years. They amount to a revolution.

On the old lines the War Office was to all intents a muddle of antiquarian survivals. On the new lines it is a clear-cut business machine, planned on ideas imported, partly from France and partly from Germany, plus some by no means unimportant original variations and improvements based on the fact that the British is an army of professional soldiers.

The great change was the institution of the Army Council. The members of that Council are the Secretary of State, the Chief of the General Staff, the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, the Master-General of the Ordnance, the Parliamentary Secretary, the Financial Secretary, and the Secretary who has to deal with its vast office work and correspondence.

While the Secretary of State exercises a general oversight and originates policy; the Chief of the Staff is responsible for the completeness and efficiency of Staff schemes, plans, and arrangements, and for military training and instruction; the Adjutant-General is concerned with recruiting and organisation, personal services, and also with the Army Medical Corps; the

Quartermaster-General has to deal with transport and movements of troops, remounts, supplies and quarters, equipment and clothing, and the Army Service Corps ; the Master-General of the Ordnance is responsible for the artillery and for fortifications and barracks ; the Financial Secretary is the head of the Pay Service and the Pensions Department.¹ Including the inspectorship service and the service controlled by the Director-General of Aeronautics, all these aspects of the life and work of the Army are thus organically grouped.

A modern army is, it will be seen, not only a huge, but a very exactly balanced organism, in which the threads of related duties run from the Secretary of State as its head to every individual soldier in every unit.

In the field, despite apparent complexity, each man in a modern army of say 160,000 of all arms, has his assigned function to fulfil, and every man is linked with the general in command through a succession of responsible intermediaries.

The real difficulty of organisation consists in the transmission of orders rapidly, safely, and

¹ Full details of the duties of the Army Council will be found in the official "Field Service Handbook."

without mistake. When orders have to pass from the general in command to the lieutenant-generals in command of army corps, from them to the major-generals in command of divisions, from them to brigadier-generals, from these to colonels, and from colonels to majors it is evident that there is the possibility both of mistake and of delay, more especially when, as nearly always happens in actual warfare, the transmission of orders is attended by danger. One means of overcoming this is the use of field telephones. No small part then of the efficiency and effectiveness of an army depends upon the ability and the organisation of its Staff.

Besides the issuing and transmission of orders the business of the Staff comprises the gathering of information on which orders must be based. The vigilance or exactitude of its Intelligence Service therefore plays no small part in success or failure. Of that service the Flying Corps is now an essential part.

From this summary it will be gathered that the ground plan of a modern army covers on the one hand its combatant Arms arranged to give each other the maximum of support, and on the other its technically non-combatant

Services, and its real fighting strength consists in the balance between them. If the Services are defective the Arms suffer; if the Arms are defective the Services are soon thrown into confusion.

The general therefore of a modern army has a two-sided duty to fulfil. On the one side he is at the head of a great fighting machine; on the other he is at the head of a large and complex supply business. He has not only to bring the whole force of his mind to bear on his operations, and the efficiency of his Arms, but to keep his attention and his eye upon the Services through which alone his operations can continue to be possible.

It is not difficult consequently to realise why men who can carry such a burden with brilliance and originality must of necessity be rare.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION OF THE MODERN "UNIT"

FROM what has already been said it should be evident that the training of a modern soldier presents two connected yet distinct aspects. One is the training of individuals to act together as a military unit ; the other is the training of the units themselves to act together in the field.

Both these aspects of training are essential if there is to be that complete and ready co-operation between units and that intelligent carrying out of orders, which gives the maximum of military strength to the organic masses. Obviously, however complete may be the discipline and efficiency of units, if they have had no practical training in field operations, field operations, when these have to be undertaken, will be novel and strange, and the organic masses will not show to their best effect until the novelty and the strangeness have worn off. In the meantime this learning in the school of

experience may have proved costly. The fact has been exemplified in many campaigns.

For that reason in recent times "training in camp" has been in this country established for all arms and branches of the service, regular and territorial. The necessity of "training in camp" caused the substitution of the Territorial for the older Volunteer force. During "camp" the units take part in operations conducted as nearly as possible under the conditions of actual war. Forming parts of a division and doing their work as nearly as possible under the conditions of war, they are made ready to take part in real operations with the confidence which comes of self-reliance. Properly carried out, such trial operations test the Intelligence work, the Staff arrangements, and the Services of an army, and disclose weak spots. They form too, perhaps, the best practical examination of the discipline and efficiency of units, and of the balance and working combination of the Arms, that can be devised.

It is only, in fact, when a unit is seen doing the work it is intended to do that the quality of its instruction can rightly be gauged. In the British Army of recent years the instruction of units has happily tended to be practical. This

is one of the valuable lessons we brought away from South Africa. Nor has it been found that the more practical instruction has involved any sacrifice of the older essentials of drill. On the contrary, practical work gives the individual soldier, by appealing to his intelligence, a keener interest in his profession.

The observations just made on the value of training in camp, while they now reflect the opinion of nearly all military men in this country, would probably at one time have raised controversy. Nearly every problem connected with military training has led to keen discussion. All these problems, it will be found, centre round one of two points—the training of the individual soldier, or the training of the unit. We may, though it seems at first sight an inversion of the natural order, take the training of the unit first under, at any rate, this general aspect, because it will help to throw light on the training of the soldier individually and to smooth away technical difficulties.

The one view, that which favours training in camp, has already been summarised. It was first adopted on modern lines for the French Army, and it was the evident value and success

of the system which led to its adoption by the British.

The other view, favoured in Germany, upholds the superiority of the system of inspections. Advocates of the inspection system, as carried out in Germany, hold that under it the test of training and discipline can be made more searching and severe; and a higher level of discipline reached, as well as a more thorough instruction. Units and regiments in Germany have been accustomed to "work up" for the inspection as a class at school would work up for an examination. In all respects the inspection was an examination. Officers knew that their promotion largely depended on the points scored at the inspection. Hence, in theory at all events, they would do their work thoroughly, and you ought, on the theory, to have the army in general well up to its work.

Prince Kraft, among others, was a warm believer in inspections. He held that the system was decidedly better than the French. As for the British, of course, nothing they did, from the military point of view, was of much account. The inspection system, however, had its critics even in Germany. It was asserted that as the requirements were severe, and the

"grind" hard, the tendency was to score points by effects which were showy rather than really valuable. There was a good deal of substance in the objection. Prince Kraft, in his "Letters on Infantry," says :

"I have often heard 'working up for inspection' bitterly blamed. But if ever any blame was undeserved it is this, since the power of a body of troops is based upon their striving after an object by the direction of a single will, that is to say, on obedience and discipline ; not, however, on that rigid discipline which does only what it is ordered and waits for the order, but on such as meets the order half-way and endeavours to ascertain and anticipate the wishes of its superiors. He therefore who exerts himself to show his troops at the inspection as nearly as possible as the superior officer would wish to see them does no mere eye-service, but practises exactly that correct obedience which has made our army great. . . .

"It has been said in many pamphlets—that our system, which finishes the drill season with an inspection, is in some ways objectionable, since it is impossible for any one rightly to estimate the value of a commanding officer or of his command by the single day or the single hour of inspection,

while, if we hold to the system of inspections, the fate of the officers concerned depends upon one lucky or unlucky day. In place of it is suggested the French system of camps, where the superior officers live with their subordinates during the whole period of the training, and are thus able to observe them daily. But this argument is ill-grounded, for the definite opinion which one forms of an officer does not depend upon the one single day of inspection. There are many opportunities during the entire year of seeing him work in front of his men, for instance, at regimental and brigade exercises, at field manœuvres, etc., while his character as regards the preservation of discipline can be judged by looking at the defaulters' book ; moreover, one may see how he behaves under exceptional circumstances ; this is all true, even if we omit to take into account the fact that a commander who is confident of himself and of his men is not dependent upon good or ill-luck on the day of inspection. Again, one's opinion of an officer is not definitely made up from the experience of a single year ; he has the opportunity during several years of removing any unfavourable impression which may have been formed of him. But if he is placed in a camp of instruction and

has to carry out every portion of his training, even the least important, under the eyes of his superiors, and if he thus feels himself constantly watched and criticised, he will never gain either independence or self-confidence. Past masters in any art do not fall from the skies ; every one makes mistakes at first. If he cannot keep these mistakes to himself and thus learn to avoid them, but is obliged to feel them as it were noted against him, he will never acquire any spirit of initiative. In this respect camps of instruction after the French system are not preferable to our system of inspections ; I do not mention other evils, inseparable from the former, which have made us hold to our plan of inspections, detachment trainings, and manœuvres.

"The sort of inspection which I have proposed is in every way sufficient as a means of forming a well-grounded opinion on the capacity of a battalion commander, and, since he knows that he will be inspected in this manner, it stimulates him to train his command in such a way that his juniors will gain their necessary independence in action, while he himself will get out of the habit of misplaced (and in war impossible) interference, to which the practice of elementary drill will naturally have inclined

him. To obtain this end it is necessary only that the inspecting officer shall carry out his inspection with ample kindness, for the uncertainty in which the officer inspected finds himself as to which movements will be required of him, the feeling of being examined, and the influence which the result of the inspection may have upon his future and his reputation, produce in many officers a restlessness and an embarrassment which obscure their clear judgment ; a condition of things which is commonly called 'inspection fever.' It is therefore necessary to first quiet this inspection fever before proceeding to form an opinion. A little joke may often help to effect this. I remember a certain very excitable field officer, who was nevertheless very sound and sure, but who at the beginning of an inspection suffered so much from inspection fever that he gave the first simple words of command for the march-past in a trembling voice and all wrong. I rode up to him and said in a low tone : 'Major, I have so often seen your battalion drill beautifully under you, that in your place I should feel no fever.' He at first stared at me, then laughed, and from that moment worked his battalion faultlessly."

Now that summarises, probably as well as it

can be summarised, what may be called the pro-inspection view. But it is clear that the view fails to take into account the necessity of making soldiers, even in peace training, as far as possible practically familiar with war conditions. Otherwise they may, as the present war has proved, gather altogether false impressions of what war conditions really are, and suffer in consequence losses that might otherwise have been avoided. Can they, in short, be made into practically efficient soldiers merely by carrying out manœuvres, which, infected by the spirit engendered by the inspection system, tend in turn to run towards the scoring of points by exhibition effects? It was noted by Prince Kraft that even German officers of field rank often showed a complete misunderstanding of the conditions of war. They put themselves into positions where infallibly in war they must have been shot almost straight away, and tried to do things which in actual operations would be impossible.

"Each individual has only a certain amount of strength of body and of strength of nerves. If one uselessly expends one's strength of body before there is any necessity to do so, one runs some danger of finding it wanting at the critical

moment. It is just the same with regard to the nerves. No one is indifferent to danger to life. But the strength of our nerves carries us through. Generals who press forward before it is necessary into the foremost line of battle run some risk of finding their nerves fail them at the critical moment. This does not arise from a sudden spasm of fear ; oh no ! Shattered nerves do not act so straightforwardly as that. They cunningly creep upon a man in the shape of tactical and strategical considerations, and prove to him that all the rules of war command him at this particular moment to delay his attack, to fall back upon the defensive, or to break off the action ; or they use some other beautiful scientific expression. Take, for example, a general commanding a division who has been with the foremost skirmishers from daybreak till noon, and has heard the bullets whistle for five or six hours, whilst the battalion of the advanced guard has been driving in the enemy's outposts, and who at last finds himself in presence of the enemy's main position, where the foe is awaiting him in order of battle, being perhaps obliged to stand there because he is afraid that he will not be able to effect any farther retreat. A general so placed is easily inclined to believe that the

troops are tired, because he is weary himself, and that they have done enough, because he himself has been for six hours under fire ; while as a matter of fact it is only the leading battalion which is fatigued. He decides then to put off the attack until the next day, when the neighbouring divisions may have come up nearer to him ; so he places outposts and bivouacs his troops, and the enemy whom he had surprised is thus surprised again, but this time pleasantly. For he so gains time to draw off without loss, and escapes the catastrophe which threatened him. If this general had spared himself more personally, if he had not already been for six hours in the thick of the skirmish, and if at the very moment when he actually broke off the fight he had been present with his fresh and intact main-body, he himself being fresh and not having yet been under fire, he would have taken quite a different view of the matter and would have ordered a general attack. Thus the misplaced and exaggerated energy which will insist on looking after even the smallest things, may be the cause of an absence of true energy, and courage which is premature may result in indecision in the conduct of an action.

“Such faulty behaviour of generals in action

ceased altogether towards the end of our last lengthy campaign. After the war it was also at first given up on the drill ground. But it has gradually come in again, and threatens to become more and more habitual as the peace lasts longer, not only because the duties of peace service, which find their full expression at the inspection, tend to become habits, but also because the experience of war diminishes. . . .

"Having shown that there is a tendency to work battalions in a manner which would be impossible in war, that there is too great a rigidity of formation, many unreasonable modes of proceeding, and a very unpractical mechanism of command, the question arises as to how these evils are to be overcome. . . . A strict rule should be made that all officers, from the highest to the lowest, should, both at inspections and at the manœuvres, be allowed to post themselves in such positions only as they would be able to occupy in actual war."

A system which produces such effects, even in responsible officers, is evidently faulty, and although efforts have been made in Germany to correct it by amendments of the Military Regulations, the practice lagged behind the theory. To put the matter in a nutshell, that

42 EDUCATION OF MODERN "UNIT"

co-operation between units needed to form effective organic masses working together under conditions obtaining in war, had, under the German system, to be in effect improvised, a defect only secondary to the old British system of improvising the organic masses themselves.

We touch here what has, in fact, proved to be one of the most serious weaknesses of the modern German military system—the failure to see the necessity of the *practical* training of units *as units*. It is not enough to train each man to form a unit. The unit itself has to be trained. This failure of perception is all the more remarkable since Frederick the Great was the originator of "camps of instruction," and used them to mould his army into a military instrument surpassing anything until that time known in Europe.

One reason why training in camp was not adopted in modern Germany was the notion that training in camp is a French idea. To copy anything military from the French was distasteful. But probably a yet stronger reason was the expense. Even with our comparatively small British army before the war this training cost us nearly a quarter of a million a year. It must have cost Germany at least eight times

as much. The inspection system, on the other hand, saved the expense of transporting men, guns, and equipment. Experience in the present war, however, has shown that on our part and on the part of the French the outlay has been well justified, and that the saving on the part of the German Government was false economy.¹ For the bulk of the German troops entered upon the present struggle trained in every respect save that which mattered, and with an entirely false impression of what actual war meant and of the qualities and military efficiency of their opponents. How many German lives this mistake has cost it is almost impossible to say.

In the British Army inspections are directed to matters which cannot be covered by training in camp, and towards applying a standardised oversight, but the days in which men were trained as soldiers, yet left to imagine what soldiering really was until they had to do it, have gone for good.

¹ One of the surprises of the present War has been the steadiness, cohesion and military *habit* shown by the French troops. These qualities, assumed to be foreign to the French temperament, are, beyond question, the outcome of practical training.

CHAPTER III

SHAPING OUT THE MODERN SOLDIER

BOTH in the British and in the German Armies the *first* aim, of course, is to make units efficient in war. The modern British method of training the units as units has been spoken of as the more practical. By practical is meant a method which proceeds upon a true impression of the real conditions of present-day warfare as opposed to imagined conditions.

It is necessary, however, before going further into the training of units as units, to consider the making of the unit itself, and the formation of the individual soldier out of the recruit. That can best be done to begin with by dealing with the instruction of the infantryman. Whatever may be said to the contrary, and important as are the other Arms as its aids, the infantry is and always must be the main strength of an army, and the quality of the infantry decisive in battle.

That was the view held by Prince Kraft, and

it is the opinion held by all competent and practical soldiers. Undoubtedly some years ago an opinion for a time gained ground, though never among those whose opinion counts, at all events in this country, that infantry, if not destined in the face of modern guns to become obsolete, would at any rate become subordinate. The idea was that the battles of the future would resolve themselves into artillery duels. Such an opinion, impossible for any one to hold who knows in what military strength really consists, has by experience in the present war been finally disposed of.

The object of discipline and drill is to enable the unit of infantry to execute with rapidity and steadiness those evolutions, or changes in its form, necessary to carry out various tactics. Obviously one particular form, that say of the column, would confine tactics within very narrow limits. For all the more important tactics which operations may from time to time make advisable, a particular conformation of the unit has been worked out on the basis of experience. When an infantry unit has been well trained it is able to pass, for example, from the column formation, which it nearly always presents on the line of march, to any new form

required, and to do so readily and without confusion. It becomes, in fact, by the effect of drill, Protean ; can change into, say, column of companies, that is into long ranks ; can adopt the mass formation of quarter column, change into column of attack, or extend into open order at the word of command, and as tactics require.

Manifestly all this adds immensely to its power and utility. It was Frederick the Great, again, who first to the full extent realised that, and invented a variety of formations before his time unknown. By the readiness and steadiness with which, in consequence, his troops could deploy, and assume these formations, apparently novel, but really effective, he was able to obtain a superior military strength from inferior numbers, and to win battles where *seemingly* the weight of force was against him.

Adapting itself to varying conformations of the ground, and to the relative absence or presence of cover, as well as to the varying necessities of attack or defence, well-trained infantry has suppleness and at the same time organic and mass tenacity. In these qualities lie much of its force.

Until quite recent years Frederick the Great's

Drill Book formed the text on which was based that of other armies, the British among them. Why a change has since been made will presently be explained.

Before, however, this facility of organised movement can be reached it is necessary to educate the individual soldier into a steady attention, and an instant compliance with the word of command, which are in truth the hardest part of his military education, just as the hardest part in literary education is that of teaching a child the alphabet. This elementary instruction in drill, as well as elementary education in musketry, and in handling the bayonet, falls upon the non-commissioned officers, who shape the squads and files. The recruit anxious to blossom into a finished footman may not always see the point and value of drill, perhaps, but as a fact this is the foundation on which the whole structure of a modern army rests.

For until the recruit becomes in the matter of attention and promptitude a trained man, he is not fitted to take part with his company in its evolutions as a whole which the captain has to put it through and see that it knows. Often the non-coms have been called the backbone of the British Army. Though sometimes,

48 SHAPING THE MODERN SOLDIER

in the opinion of recruits, rather robust and ready tutors, it may be doubted if there is anywhere in the world a like body of men who are their equals, or preserve, under the stress of continual hard work, their manly good comradeship, or show anything approaching their general level of strong character.

There used to be a pretty general popular belief that the initial training of an infantryman varied between marching up and down a barrack square, and filling up his spare time in polishing his boots and buttons. As a fact the training of the British infantryman has undergone about as complete a revolution as the organisation of the War Office. He is taught not only drill but gymnastics; not only how to become expert with the bayonet, and at least a passably good if not an expert shot, but he is shown the application of his knowledge and alertness in field exercises. There is open to him the regimental school in which he can improve himself both in his general education, and in military ability. Officers, both commissioned and non-commissioned, take concern in his progress. He is nowadays with few exceptions a sober, thoughtful, and industrious man, and military discipline has been found not inconsistent with his having

his ideas about things, and discussing them when off duty with point and gusto, and commonly with plenty of native wit and humour. Altogether his life is fuller and his interests more varied than in the old days, and he is all the better for it.¹

¹ Describing in "Reynolds's Newspaper" the life of the recruit, "A Kitchener Officer" writes :

"The recruit begins with eight hours a day on the parade ground—one before breakfast, three in the forenoon, three after dinner, and one after tea. For the first few weeks the work consists entirely of elementary foot-drill, marching, the handling of the rifle, and, above all, physical training. Ten days of this weed out the unfit and the sluggards, and effect a vast improvement in the demeanour of those fitted to stand the strain. Chests expand, heads come up, shoulders square out, and the bodies move with a rhythm. The shop-walker, the ideal of ease and grace, begins to learn that he can't distinguish his right hand from his left when asked to do so without warning ; the man who found the scythe an easy weapon to wield, finds that the simple-looking bayonet is far too much for him ; the fluent speaker in the local debating society finds that it is beyond his art to explain how to form fours. But gradually we pull through and pass on to the handling of the rifle as a weapon of war. The air-gun enthusiast starts here full of confidence until he finds himself placed in the 'awkward squad' for further aiming instruction. The man who would be insulted if he were told that he could not tell the time, finds that 'six o'clock on the bull' takes a lot of finding. The first essay on the miniature range is also usually something of a disappointment. But careful individual instruction works wonders, and the men are gradually got ready for field training. All this time the work of developing muscles and expanding chests has gone

50 SHAPING THE MODERN SOLDIER

Of these changes the introduction of gymnastics and regimental schools are ideas we borrowed from Germany ; and in some points improved upon. The use of gymnastics is a revival of the practice of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It is an excellent notion, and every modern military system has adopted it.

Introduced in Germany at first in a small way, and quite unofficially, it was speedily taken up. Describing this in his " Letters on Infantry," Prince Kraft says :

" The awkward fellows, whose neglected carriage made them look like a set of ill-made images, tried hard but in vain to stand straight ; some broad-shouldered yokels still wore their peasants' clothes, while tunics to fit them were being made, and tumbled about as they fruitlessly tried to master the balance step ; some

steadily on and the marches have become longer. . . . So now off we go in high spirits to spend long hours in an attack on more or less impregnable positions held by imaginary Germans, who are finally driven out at the bayonet's point. As the weeks roll on these practices will be carried out in heavier equipment and in larger bodies, till finally our New Army is capable of going on manœuvres and marching all night to attack at dawn, or of digging all night in preparation for the attack which is hourly expected."

That is a lively but admirably photographic summary of the shaping of our recruits into the incomparable infantry who form the unbreakable back of the British Army.

with exceptionally large heads, which none of the forage caps in store would fit, still wore, as the cap-maker had not finished his task, the shabby tall hats in which they arrived ; these occasionally fell off and rolled across the barrack square ; the whole motley company blundered together over their positions, facings, and wheelings.

“In the same barracks were quartered two companies of infantry of the Alexander regiment of the Guard. During the first week after the arrival of the recruits not a single man of this regiment was to be seen in the barrack square. At the end of the week I saw the first of the infantry recruits, and then only a very small squad, drilling in the square. They already marched so well, that I thought they were a detachment of the men of the previous year. But on asking Captain von W., who commanded the company, he told me that they were recruits. I expressed my astonishment. He told me quite openly that he was no less astonished that my batteries began to drill their recruits on the very first day, before even they had got their clothing ; he allowed no man to begin to drill, unless he could drill. This seemed to me almost as if no one was allowed to go into the water before he

52 SHAPING THE MODERN SOLDIER

could swim. But the result spoke so strongly in favour of Captain von W.'s plan, that at my request he informed me as to his principle.

“ He explained to me that every man of the lower classes uses only one set of muscles in his ordinary work ; the shoemaker uses one set, the tailor another, the woodcutter another, and the agricultural labourer another ; the muscles which are least used tend to grow feeble from disuse, and this is why newly joined recruits (in nine cases out of ten) find it hard, and almost impossible, either to stand or to walk straight. They may be compelled to do so, but not without pain, which not unfrequently increases into cramp of the muscles, and this, in combination with all the new and unaccustomed things which the recruit finds in his new position, in combination also with home-sickness, leads to despondency and not rarely to insubordination, crime, and even suicide. For this reason it has become a tradition in the infantry of the Guard to instruct the recruits first of all in every kind of gymnastic exercises, which are carried on in canvas suits in the barrack room, and which advance very gradually and without effort from the easy to the more difficult, until they at length have command over all their muscles.

Since these exercises are tiring, they are not carried on for too long together, but are varied by instruction as to their new life, by showing them their arms, etc., and especially by encouraging them to ask questions, and awakening their curiosity, in order that they may gain confidence in their new position and in their superiors. The results of these exercises are soon evident in the development of the neglected muscles, which shows itself by a natural and more upright bearing and by a regular step. When this result has been obtained, they then for the first time receive their uniform, which the tailor has been fitting in the meanwhile, and commence their drill. Each man is, according to his progress, posted from time to time to the drill-squad.

“I asked him whether the infantry of the Guard had any written instructions with regard to this practice, which he could lend me. The Captain answered that all this was simply a tradition which had gradually grown up, but that he would ask the officer who was in charge of his recruits to write it out for me ; it would be very excellent practice for him, and I should have it after he had himself corrected it. He did so ; but since there were many things in it

peculiar to the infantry, I asked two of the Captains of my batteries to work it out into a regulation fitted for the artillery. I found that these two officers agreed with me as to its value, but they were in the minority, for most of the officers preferred to go on in the old style, saying that this was all very well for the infantry, but that artillery had no time for such trifles.

“After this system had been worked out, I made it a regulation for my regiment. At the next spring foot parade, which then always took place, the King looked at the regiment with his eagle eye, which took everything in, and said : ‘At last I see men well set up ; I have always been told that the artillery could not pay attention to this, on account of their special work, but I now see that it can very well be done.’ The march of the men was also freer and unconstrained than it had been before. And with all that the soldiers had been less tormented than in previous years.”

The moral as well as the merely physical value of this reform is now admitted. It has to be added, however, that when after their official adoption in Germany military gymnastics in part replaced the older and more mechanical routine of drill, and became under the inspection

system a means of scoring points, the change was driven so far that men were injured at the exercises. There is nothing, however, good that some Prussian officers of hard temper could not turn into an engine of tyranny.

In every Arm and Service a high standard of physical fitness is a first requisite of the modern soldier, and of none is that more true than of the infantryman. In the military operations of to-day, carrying his rifle and bayonet, his ammunition and his kit, including his trenching tool, he may be called upon to foot it all night, sometimes over heavy roads. He may at daybreak find himself launched into a battle lasting days and nights on end; a battle in which he must keep cool and shoot straight. Or he may, after a night spent in digging shelter trenches, have to prove the quality of his nerves, the steadiness of his eye, and the solidity of his discipline. It is evident that the man who is to go through such an experience must be athletic. The standard of physical fitness, and it may be added the standard of moral fitness in the manly sense of the word, is high. There is no place in the modern army for the unfit.

CHAPTER IV

NECESSITY OF INDIVIDUAL TRAINING

ON the very threshold of this question of the soldier's training we meet with a distinction the importance of which it is not possible to overlook. Where an army is based upon the professional principle and military service is adopted of free choice, the life of the soldier must not be made repellent. Where, on the other hand, military service is universal and compulsory, the attractiveness or otherwise of the life of the soldier is looked at from the standpoint of making the most of him as a military machine within the time allowed. The one outlook is narrower than the other, and the effect of the difference goes deep.

All the tendency of modern training has been to make the soldier not only a better physical machine, but a more intelligent combatant. In modern war physique, most important though it be, is after all less important than mind, and that is true not only of officers but of the rank and file.

In no modern European army has that fact been more fully recognised than in the British. It is in fact one of the effects of democracy. Consequently it has largely influenced the training of the French infantry as well as of our own. In both these armies the difference between the officer and the private is recognised rather as a difference of degree in duties and responsibility rather than as a difference in kind, which, while leaving all the intelligence to the officer, reduces the private to a mere tool. The British and the French soldier is a better tool because he is treated as an intelligent one ; as a subordinate comrade, rather than as a mere inferior.

The most serious difficulty to be overcome under the system of compulsory universal service is to prevent the system degenerating into a mechanical manufacture in the mass of men whose training remains superficial even though it may have been severe. Under modern conditions, if the soldier's training is not individual, it must be in the main valueless. Training that is not individual can never reach the level of efficiency demanded by the conditions of modern war.

That in fact is the weak spot of universal service. The weak spot has been well recognised

in Germany, and many efforts have been made to overcome it. On the whole the treatment of recruits improved, but the tradition of rigour still held its ground.

Taking the crack regiments of the Russian Guard as a model, Prince Kraft hoped to see the treatment throughout the German Army brought up to the Guards' level.

“ Among the infantry of the Guard I found such care for the education, training, instruction, and health of each individual man as could in few families be improved, while it was far greater than any man of the lower classes of the people would ever find in his own family. The maintenance of discipline was brought into careful connection with instruction in drill, and all exercises, including the gymnastics, were used to increase both health and discipline, while the natural tendencies of each individual man were most conscientiously taken into account.

“ In this manner the recruit quickly learns to subordinate his muscles to his will. At the same time he learns also gradually to submit his will to the word of command. In order to secure this it is only necessary to direct that the exercises, even the easiest, shall not be carried

out except by the word of command of the instructor. The man being thus accustomed at the word . . . to make the required movements, the necessary muscles act later on unconsciously at the word of command, just as the human will compels the members to move, though the man himself does not know that his will first affects the brain, and that from this the order travels by a roundabout way through the nerves to the muscles. The greatest care must be taken that the recruit is not roughly spoken to or frightened. If the instructors (officers or N.C. officers) are gentle, the recruit will soon gain confidence. Living in barracks of which the sanitation is medically cared for, and in cleanliness, such as is quite unusual in most lower class families, the recruit has, together with ample and good food, sufficient exercise of a nature to develop his body, a regular life, and plenty of sleep ; in short, he enjoys such entire welfare, that he feels how fortunate is his lot, and blindly obeys whatever order his superior may give. Thus is developed the electrifying power of the word of command. That which in former days was begotten of the fear of the stick, is now born of trust, with this difference, that its effect is more lasting. Since

in former times when the fear of the stick vanished, discipline vanished also. Desertions are more rare in these days.

“ Especial care is necessary with regard to the connection between the exercises and disciplinary punishment. No recruit, up to the day when he joins the company for duty, that is to say, until he is considered to have learnt his elementary drills, should ever be punished for faults at drill. During the ten or twelve weeks of the recruits’ drill no recruit, however awkward he may be, should ever be sent to extra drill or to punishment drill ; for the day’s work of the recruit is so measured out, that he has no spare time, his hours being divided between drills, exercises, instruction, sleep, eating, etc., as is best for the man’s health. More drill would so tire him that his health might suffer in consequence. If there are men (and there always are) who join in such a low condition of mental and bodily development, that they cannot keep up with the others, then the more advanced may be dismissed from their drill earlier than the allotted time. The Captain (i.e. in the Prussian Guards) is generally called upon for an explanation whenever he punishes a recruit during the period of his instruction,

whether it be with a minor punishment or with arrest. Such a punishment is not generally inflicted for a failure at drill or for awkwardness, since orders are given that recruits are to be treated with forbearance and patience, even when there is reason to believe that there is some want of will to do right. A recruit is not punished unless there is absolute proof that the fault was intentionally committed, or in the case of such faults as are not allowed by law to go unpunished. The characters of the men vary very much, and there certainly are some who are ill-conditioned, who resist every order and all kinds of obedience, and find pleasure in crime and disorder. These are not, however, so numerous as is believed. But if it be once taken for granted that want of will exists, when in truth it is only want of intelligence and awkwardness, true ill-will is easily produced. It is thus better to have too much patience rather than too little.

“When certain companies have acquired especial skill in the systematic training of their men, and when they have had luck in the recruits posted to them, so that they by chance have not received a single worthless individual, it has happened that they have in this manner

created an excellent discipline, and have not found it necessary to give the punishment of arrest during a year or eighteen months. And these companies are moreover the best in drill, discipline, and order."

The truth of all this the present war has conclusively proved. But it has not less conclusively proved that the spirit of these counsels has failed to take hold of the German Army in the mass. Whatever the exceptions may be, it is certain that the training of the German Army as a whole has fallen a long way below the standard here laid down. Regarded as an instrument of aggressive war rather than as a necessity of national defence, the German Army has been used for the manufacture of soldiers in quantity as tools of a policy, rather than as imparting a needed skill to men fulfilling a patriotic duty. That has made a difference, intangible perhaps in detail, yet in the aggregate enormous.

Officers and non-commissioned officers came to look upon themselves as fulfilling a hard task ; and it is little surprising that in their attitude towards their men the taskmaster came more in evidence than the instructor, or that the zest of the men should in consequence suffer.

Under such conditions the military defects inherent in the universal service system stand out. When military service is fulfilled as a national necessity and duty, that system may turn out an admirable army of defence. Despite the supposed example of the war of 1870 to the contrary, it may be questioned if the system is adapted to produce the army most effective for all purposes. For offensive war an army, with the individuality of training resulting from a common professional spirit, is without question the one instrument which can be deemed effective. This is proved by the wars of Frederick the Great, whose army was a purely professional organisation. Though recruited from and made up of all the riff-raff and adventurers of Europe, it showed that mass-trained conscripts could not stand up against it. Not less is the fact proved by the achievements of the British Army. It is safe to say that British conquests in all parts of the world could never have been made save by individually trained troops.

Again, there is the difficulty of training arising from the fact that any large mass of conscripts is bound to be heterogeneous ; to include, that is to say, a considerable percentage whom no amount of "licking into shape" will ever

convert into good soldiers. This kind of men, who automatically weed themselves out of a professional army by keeping clear of it, are the very element which under the universal service system gives double trouble with indifferent military results. The inevitable tendency, therefore, is to be content with training "in the lump." Prince Kraft saw that it would not do :

"This systematic training of the infantry soldier, and the care given to each individual man, even in his musketry course and in his work in the open country after he has finished his drill as a recruit, was one of the principal causes of our grand success in the last great war. The soldier endured all hardships, not from fear of punishment, but through confidence in his officers ; he looked upon his toil as something unavoidable, as his fate, for he knew that if it had been possible he would have been spared it ; he followed his officer in battle out of sheer trust ; he was not discouraged even when he found the enemy in superior strength ; he never suffered from panic, for he knew the value of mutual support and held to it, not because he was obliged, but from love for his regiment, in which everything had always gone well with him.

“ At a time when the soldier is supplied with an accurate firearm, and when the well-aimed fire of individual men must have more result than ill-aimed volleys ; when the soldier, in order to fire well and with good effect, must lie comfortably on the ground instead of standing in a close crowded line ; when he is, moreover, no longer a mere portion of a stiff machine, since each man can use his weapon with intelligence ; when the infantry have ceased to be only food for powder, and have become a combination of single units working independently, at such a time the careful training of the individual soldier must decide the issue of battle.

“ But the task which year by year falls to the instructors of recruits is a difficult one. The greater proportion of the recruits come to the regiment raw in every respect, bodily, morally, and mentally ; no inconsiderable number of them have already been in prison. I have said above that the recruit is as a rule neither good nor bad ; the greater part of our nation is, at the age of 20 years, morally and intellectually, at the standard of a child of educated parents at 10 years old. There are even some individuals who are below this. I have had recruits who found great difficulty in pronouncing the number

34. I asked one of these to count. His scale of numbers went up to 11 ; he had heard of 13 and 17, but he did not know what they meant. This was a German ; the Slavs of our Fatherland are still more difficult to educate, since they do not understand German. They are further accustomed to an almost incredible amount of roughness in their intercourse with their parents and associates. I remember a recruit who could only speak Polish, of whom I as a lieutenant had to undertake the training, and who did not understand a single word that I said, and stood staring vacantly before him. I told another of the recruits who could speak German and Polish to translate what I was saying. This fellow went up to him and gave him at once a tremendous box on the ears. When I reproved him for this, he met me with the startling argument : ‘ Oh, you must let me do it, Lieutenant, he understands much better now.’ The box on the ear in their society answered the same purpose as ‘ Do you hear ? ’ does in Berlin, or as the touch on the shoulder which many men use to draw attention to their words. What patience is required to make such men understand all that belongs to their duty in the field, to order, and to discipline, without

even once knocking them down, he only can know whose forbearance has been thus put to a practical test. If sometimes an excitable and eager N.C. officer or lieutenant loses his patience, and has to answer before an inexorable court-martial for some blow given by him, looking at things from the point of view of human nature, one can only pity him. When I therefore read, either in the Press or in the reports of the Landtag or Reichstag, similar isolated cases angrily quoted as examples of a universal and overbearing military despotism, I cannot help wishing that each of those who so speak, write, or vote, might be compelled by law to serve for twelve years as an officer or N.C. officer." . . .

Inevitably the men who give most trouble come in for the most rigorous treatment. That spoils the common morale, and drags the work down to a treadmill round.

"It is the more difficult to train such men since they are mixed with others educated to a higher moral and mental standard, and these more advanced and cultured persons must be trained in quite another manner. It is only wonderful that the patience of the instructor of recruits does not fail him under this labour of Sisyphus. . . .

“ When I say that the training in detail of each individual man was one of the principal reasons why our infantry was victorious, I do not by any means maintain that even this might not be improved (for what human institution is altogether perfect ?), nor that this manner of training is carried out as well and wisely in every infantry regiment of the German Army as it is in the infantry of the Guard at Berlin. When I received the command of a division of infantry in the provinces I found that the principles which I have stated above were by no means universally applied. The gymnastic exercises were practised more for themselves, because they were laid down, than as a means of instruction, while the class of recruits was more difficult to manage, and the staff of instructors was not so skilled. The big and already well-shaped men who are sent to the Guard are naturally more easily trained than the many rather unshapely recruits who go to the infantry of the line. Men morally perverted, who have already committed crimes for which they are outside the pale of society, are never sent to the Guard, and thus the infantry of the line has to deal with thieves and other criminals. Moreover, the N.C. staff of the infantry of the line is not from its social

position so well educated as is that of the Guard, since the attraction to the capital of the German Empire is naturally stronger than that to some small garrison, in which there is no opportunity of acquiring a connection which may be of use for later advancement. But how desirable it is that the N.C. officer should be better educated than the recruits will be evident to every one who realises what patience, as has been shown above, he must exercise towards the private soldier, and how superior he must feel himself to him, not to lose his temper when he comes across great awkwardness, taking care not to mistake the latter for ill-will, until he has made sure that ill-will does truly lie behind it, which is indeed often the case. . . .

“For all these reasons the system of individual instruction did not take such root in these regiments as in the infantry of the Guard. I did my best to introduce it gradually; *gradually*, since a matter which called for the zealous help and assistance of each individual could not be arranged all at once by a mere order. Indeed an order stood in the way of any such action, for by regulation the direction of the detail of the training of the men is the especial charge of the officers commanding

regiments. In them I found willing assistants ; good results soon showed themselves. Love of praise and emulation between the different regiments did the rest. Crime, punishments, want of discipline, and desertions visibly diminished, and the men had in a few years a freedom and elegance of step, which compared well with the painfully stiff pace of the former soldiers."

It is evident, therefore, that unless the training of the soldier be individual real efficiency will not be reached ; and that the professional army starts in the race for real efficiency with a big advantage.

CHAPTER V

SKILL WITH THE BAYONET

THE more attentively it is looked at, the more clearly does this individual training of the soldier stand out as the mark of a really *modern* army. Where individual training is adopted and *acted upon* it influences every branch of training in every Arm and Service. Through that of necessity it influences the efficiency of the units. Through the units in turn it adds to the power and tenacity of the organic masses. Through the masses it affects the character of their command.

There can in fact, so far as military quality and true fighting strength are concerned, be no comparison between an army built upon the foundation of individual training and an army built upon training "in the lump." Be the show made by troops of the latter on parade what it may, in the operations of war the army trained on non-individual lines must figure as a bad second.

The difference which individual training makes in skill with the rifle may be admitted. What perhaps is not so evident to the non-military mind is that individual training makes no less a difference in skill with the bayonet. Before the present war it was assumed that if the rifle had taken a back place the bayonet might to all intents be looked upon as an out-of-date curiosity, save under very exceptional emergencies. But competent authorities who adhered to a quite opposite view have proved to be right. This throws further light on why a skilful infantry decides the issue of battle. The tendency in the German Army was to look down upon skill with the bayonet as rather an exhibition accomplishment, and to practise it, in consequence, rather in a perfunctory manner.

As a critic of the German Army, and an advocate of individual training, Prince Kraft came also up against that tendency. He did not consider it possible to reach in the German infantry any high general level of skill in this respect, but he insisted that the infantryman ought at least to reach confidence in his powers of attack and defence with this his second characteristic weapon.

“Why should the soldier learn the bayonet

exercise when the fire of rifles is decisive ? Such questions appear on paper to be reasonable. Yes ; even a practical infantry officer of high rank, whose authority no one who knew him would dispute, said to me once, as he watched the men exercising with bayonets and padded jackets : ‘ That is all modern rubbish, in which so much time is spent, that at last the men do not know how to load their rifles in action.’

“ We know also that Napoleon I, who of all great captains had the greatest experience of war, laid down as a principle : ‘ The firearm is everything, the rest nothing.’ The value of this maxim must increase with the improvement of the firearm. But we do not teach gymnastics in order to show our jumping or activity before the enemy, but in order to strengthen the power of the muscles of the men. With strength grows self-confidence, with self-confidence courage. He who is skilled, knows it ; he who knows it, presses on. We do not teach the bayonet exercise in order that the infantry may rush in on arms of precision with the bayonet alone, as the Austrians did in 1864 with great loss, and in 1866 to their ruin, but we wish to teach it in order that the soldier may not fear a fight with the bayonet, may feel himself secure so long as

he has his bayonet on his rifle, and may hold the certainty of victory in his hand. Goltz, in his work 'The Nation in Arms,' has brought forward the moral superiority of the offensive in such an overwhelming manner, that nothing can be added to what he has said. But the moral effect that is produced by the offensive on a large scale, is in small actions the result of a determination to attack with the bayonet. He who determines so to attack gains half the victory, since the enemy seldom waits to receive the assault. But he who has not made up his mind to come at last to the bayonet can never win, for he can have no serious intention to assault. He who does not know how to use his bayonet will certainly not be determined finally to attack with it, and thus he will never make a serious attack.

“However true Napoleon’s maxim may be, and though bayonet fights are rare, yet there were some in the last war. Is a man in this case to use his rifle as a club? Ought he to be exposed to the chance of being unarmed as soon as he has knocked over one enemy, for certainly as a rule the stock will break if he clubs his rifle? After the storming of the forts at Düppel many rifles were found to be without stocks. When

Prince Frederic Charles asked a soldier why he used his butt instead of his bayonet, the man answered : ‘ I don’t know ; when you get your dander up the thing turns round in your hand of itself.’ This means that, if the man is more accustomed to strike than to point, he will use his rifle as a club as soon as excitement overcomes him and nature gets the upper hand. Therefore it is necessary to make the soldier so accustomed to the bayonet by constant practice in pointing with that weapon, that it becomes natural to him to point, and that he will point, when he is excited, instead of hammering.

“When I received my elementary instruction in military knowledge I was taught that a Frenchman could by nature beat a German in a bayonet fight. Involuntarily I formed the idea that in that case the German would be wise to avoid fighting with the bayonet against a Frenchman. Some very sound old officers went so far as to lay down, when arms of precision were introduced, the principle that it was right, when threatened with a bayonet charge, to retire firing from one position to another. Now that I have seen a few battles and many engagements, I know that from such action no other effect can be expected than the loss of the battle.

“The principle which was laid down by the most trusted Austrian infantry tacticians, that the only antidote to arms of precision was the bayonet, cost the brave Austrian infantry much blood in 1864, and became quite untenable in 1866. He who should endeavour, without firing a shot, to cross the whole of the zone which in these days is swept by infantry fire, would certainly remain a corpse in front of the enemy’s line. But he who, on the other hand, does not make up his mind at the beginning of an action to go in at the close of the fire-fight, if the enemy will not give way, until he can see the whites of the eyes of the foe, has no intention of making a real attack and will not be victorious. Yes; make the intention to charge home apparent, or it will be better not to go into action at all. That sort of thing would remind one of those beautiful strategical manœuvres which concealed the appearance of any intention to give battle, and therefore failed dismally.

“I do not want every soldier to become a skilled fighter with the bayonet (that we shall never get), but each man should be able with ease to give a good strong point, when a point is needed, and should have obtained confidence that when he does so he will hit his enemy and

kill him. The spiritless 'clip-clap' which we sometimes hear for half an hour together, by the word of command of some stupid N.C. officers, is sheer waste of time, and is very like that stage fight, of which an old experienced N.C. officer said to his pupils: 'I give you my word of honour, you wouldn't pierce a sheet of wet blotting-paper.' "

Now it has already in the present war been abundantly proved that the mass of the German infantry make a poor show in a bayonet *mêlée*, and as against British footmen are almost helpless. Partly this is a matter of temperament, but partly also it is due to the lack of any training of value. In a bayonet fight it comes to each man's confidence in himself, and in his alertness and his skill. Like the fencer, the skilful man keeps his eye on his opponent's eye, never on his opponent's weapon. The lunges and parries of a bayonet *mêlée* are made with lightning-like rapidity; a difference of the smallest fraction of a second in alertness decides. On the cool, skilful, and alert man it is almost any odds.

This general inexpertness on the part of the German infantry as a whole—there are of course exceptions, the Prussian Guard for instance—can only have arisen from the notion that

effective work with the bayonet had gone out never to return.

In the present war the mistake has turned out costly. Not only have German infantry been in consequence unable as a rule to defend their trenches when attacked at close quarters, but in the night attacks made during the battle of the Aisne, even when owing to superior force or surprise they actually got into British positions, they were not able to retain their advantage. If anything could prove not only the importance of the infantryman knowing the use of his arms, but the value of modern individual training, it was that remarkable uphill charge with the bayonet in which the Northamptonshires routed a force of German infantry far more numerous. There is an equally striking instance of it in the brilliantly successful bayonet attack made by our Indian troops at La Bassée.

CHAPTER VI

MARKSMANSHIP AND FIELD WORK

EVEN more marked is the effect of individual training on the infantryman's skill as a marksman.

Contrary to another now common belief, it is not alone the modern field gun and the modern howitzer which have made the difference between the tactics of to-day and those even of forty years ago. The difference is big, but it has been made mainly by the modern rifle.

When the Prussian Government in the early 'sixties re-armed their troops with the needle-gun, the fact was at once recognised by far-seeing military men, that such a weapon must radically modify infantry tactics. Decrease in the bore of a rifle, as everybody knows, increases the muzzle velocity of the shot, and the greater velocity by flattening the trajectory widens the effective range. The effective range is the distance within which a given proportion of the shots may be reckoned, in the hands of

trained riflemen, to prove hits. Evidently the nearer the sighting can be brought to point-blank the greater is the chance of accuracy.

Now the old musket had an effective range up to 200 yards, and within that range it was nearly as deadly a weapon as the most modern rifle, apart of course from rapidity of fire. The introduction of the rifling principle, that is the grooving inside the bore which causes the missile to spin, lengthened the effective range to 800 yards. Everybody has seen how the spin given to an arrow by the feather upon it causes it to carry farther, and to traverse the arc it makes through the air always point forward. But for the spin the arrow would, in falling, remain point upward as shot from the bow, and drop sideways. It was because of this that, before rifling was introduced, shot had to be made round. With rifling the elongated shot and the cartridge became possible, and with the cartridge came the introduction of loading from the breech instead of from the muzzle.

On the needle-gun the French chassépôt was a marked improvement. The bore of the chassépôt was, however, still 0·51 inch. Following a variety of experiments the Germans again re-armed their forces in 1890-91 with a new

rifle having a bore of only 0·3 inch. The British troops not long afterwards were re-armed with a small-bore rifle, introducing the magazine principle. This has led to the modern type of weapon, which in addition to narrow bore has a magazine plus an automatic feed; and an effective range up to 2000 yards.

Clearly enough, such an extension of range, combined with such an increase in rapidity of fire, must have a searching effect on modern tactics. It will already have been gathered, however, that infantry evolutions call for as much invention as do improvements in the rifle itself. The one kind of invention, nevertheless, did not keep pace with the other. While not a few were interested in improving the rifle, nobody in particular was interested in improving the Drill Regulations.

Modifications made were tentative and not enough. Broadly, these were the circumstances under which we entered the South African war. Believing we were going to meet a mob of farmers, we found we had to meet a mass of excellent riflemen, who had adopted and learned evolutions, novel to us, based upon modern rifle power. Happily we very soon picked up their wrinkles, and working the best of the new

tactics into what was still useful in the old, produced the amended Regulations which have made the British infantry one of the surprises of the present war.

Notoriously to become an expert shot a rifleman must practise with his weapon until handling it becomes second nature. The theoretical rules should be clear and brief enough to be carried in his head, and come to mind instantly by association. In due time the rules are absorbed in expertness, just as a practised mathematician works out problems correctly without giving rules a conscious thought.

Of course efficiency with the rifle was valued in the German Army, and there was anxiety to increase it, but less as an individual than as a mass efficiency. Taking it all round the level of mass efficiency considered as practicably attainable was not what we should consider high, or even satisfactory. It was looked upon, however, in Germany as higher than the mass efficiency in this respect of other armies. Men who showed an aptitude for rifle shooting were transferred for ordinary battalions of the line into the Jaeger regiments, corps trained as marksmen, and to fight in open order. In the same way the men of finest physique were creamed out to

form the regiments of the Prussian Guard, each 3000 strong, or with reserves, 5000 strong. Like the Army Corps of the Guard, the Jaegers are classed as "crack" troops. It was not held to be practicable to bring the German infantry as a whole up to the Jaeger level.

To secure, however, the higher level of mass efficiency aimed at, the Military Regulations were, after the war of 1870, carefully overhauled, and new rules laid down for musketry instruction. The rules were too elaborate. They were an example of failing to see the wood for the trees. To set the average German conscript in a line battalion problems in mental arithmetic and expect him to think them out in the excitement of battle, is the sort of thing that could only occur to people hag-ridden by theory. Prince Kraft fell foul of this, and insisted that it simply would not work :

"Our men have to learn and remember too many numbers, so many indeed that simple and untrained heads cannot do it. Only think of the regulations of the school of musketry with regard to the height of the sight at different distances. I think we might simplify this. I do not dispute the truth of what the school of musketry lays down, but it is too much for an

uneducated man to remember. I think that it would be sufficient if he knew that when firing at cavalry at 400 metres and under, he is only to use the 400 metre sight, and is always to aim at the feet of the horses ; and that when firing at targets representing men at ranges under 400 metres, he is to use only the small leaf and should aim at their feet. Then the soldier has to think only of the 400 metre sight and the small leaf. He must be taught to follow the command of his officer (section leader) at ranges above 400 metres. If, however, he has to do with a target representing the bust or the head of a man at short ranges, I think that, rather than burden his memory with a mass of figures, it would be better, considering how much practice at targets our men have, to teach him to judge instinctively how much below the target he should aim, according as, in proportion to the range, it is more or less distinctly visible.

“On other points also their instruction burdens the memory of the soldiers very much ; I think too much. I believe that if the instruction were more applied and practical this might be diminished. We have, it is true, excellent directions for instruction, but I have never yet seen a handbook which confined itself solely to

what the private soldier ought to know ; this should be divided into what the recruit has to study, and what the older soldier must be taught. I do not think that you could do a greater service to the infantry than by preparing such a handbook. It would be a long and tiring task, for you must employ an immense time in trying to make it very short."

That is excellent advice, and efforts were made to follow it. The regulations were amended, but the principles of the system—contentment with a merely passable level of mass proficiency, and the systematic picking of the plums out of the pudding to form corps of plums—tended to keep down solid improvement. In the British infantry individual skill is encouraged. If there is a percentage of first-class shots in a company, naturally the rest try to reach the small level. Independently of the sarcasms of the sergeant, a bad shot has to face the "public opinion" of the section. Added to the severe expressions of his captain and lieutenant, this makes him hurry up to stiffen his form.

The result of their unsound system is that the shooting of the average German infantryman has been, as described by our own men,

“rotten,” and “rotten ” as measured with the British standard it assuredly is.

Riflemen cannot be produced like pins out of a factory, but a lot of German instructors had the notion that they could.

“Every infantry officer knows how hard it is to teach the men to handle their rifles correctly. It is not sufficient that the soldier should know what he is to do with his rifle ; no, he must also make use of this knowledge instinctively without having to think what he ought to do. I will only remind you of the need for careful attention to the bolting and unbolting of the safety apparatus. Just as the sportsman, before he fires, without thinking mechanically cocks his gun, so the infantry soldier must, before *he* fires, mechanically but correctly, slowly and without a jerk, unbolt the safety lock, and must again bolt his loaded rifle when the fire has ceased. He must be one with his rifle, and must know whether it is loaded or not without being obliged to look to see. He must mechanically, and without having to think, come correctly to the ‘present,’ and he must be quite unable to pull the trigger in any other way than slowly and without a jerk.

“It is unfortunately a common fault of drill

instructors, when teaching the handling of arms, to attach greater importance to the working together, and to the resounding slap on the butt (to which every sergeant would like to join an 'Eyes left!'), than to the skilful use of the rifle in accordance with the regulations. Even under the very best drill instructors it is a long time before the correct handling of his arms becomes second nature to a soldier. He must practise it hundreds and thousands of times. But it *must* become second nature to him, for when the mind of an ordinary man is affected by the knowledge that his life is in danger, he does only that which is made natural to him by constant practice; it is impossible to expect much at such a moment from his powers of reflection.

"This is also true of fire discipline. I have very often observed how in battle, in the presence of danger, fire discipline falls to pieces. Troops which are not properly instructed do not aim; they do not even shoot; they simply make a noise. Even before I had ever seen an action, men with experience of war assured me, that it was a proof of a certain standard of training in infantry, if in a hot fight they put their rifles to their shoulders before firing.

During the battle of Königgrätz I witnessed some most irregular fire which, as the rifles were held vertical, all went up into the air. I was galloping on in front of my batteries, in order to select the next position to which to lead them. When I, accompanied by my major, some aides-de-camp, orderlies, and a trumpeter, reached the heights, I found myself within about twenty or thirty paces of a mass of the enemy's infantry of the strength of about half a battalion ; they had been turned out of Chlum, which lay on our right, and wanted to get to Nedelist on our left, and thus found themselves between our infantry, who had already advanced beyond them, and my line of artillery. They were as much surprised as we were, and thought that our group of ten or twelve horsemen were the Staff leading a charge of cavalry. At least they opened an irregular fire. I was quite close, and I saw most of the bullets go straight up into the air. Only one man took aim, and hit the major's horse in the body as he turned to retire ; for we few horsemen could not certainly attack 500 infantry with the sword ; so we hurried back to our batteries and opened fire on them.

“ But how far more difficult than even this it is to teach infantry during the excitement of

battle to attend to words of command and cautions, as to on which target, with what sight, and with what description of fire they are to act, whether they are to use volleys or independent fire, and moreover to accustom them to cease firing when they have expended the stated number of cartridges in independent fire. But every one who has seen even only field firing on a range knows that the effect of our costly infantry arm is *nil* unless the words of command and the cautions which are given be obeyed.

“Certainly much has been done to simplify the use of the rifle. I especially refer to the flat trajectory which, when the enemy is so close that independent fire alone is possible (since the fight then rages so hotly), permits of the use of a single sight, provided that aim is taken at the bottom of the target, i.e. at the feet of the enemy. But if, as I have shown above, it implies a certain degree of fire discipline when the men will even bring their arms to the ‘present’ before firing, how much more will be needed before they can be made to aim at the bottom of the target.”

Fire control is all-important, but the real basis of fire control must be the skill of the

men themselves. A sergeant in charge of a skilful section should keep the shooting in hand with little trouble. This duty entrusted primarily in the British Army to non-commissioned officers, men of judgment and experience, is in the German Army thrown upon lieutenants. The difference is to our advantage.

“ The less a man is trained the more is he inclined to ‘shoot up his pluck.’ During the first campaign in which I took part, I was present at an unimportant affair of outposts, after which a lieutenant inspected the pouches of his men. The older soldiers had fired three, four, or five rounds, but all the recruits had expended over twenty. If we take such facts into account some little doubt will steal into our hearts as to whether the word of command ‘Five cartridges rapid fire’ can ever be obeyed in close fighting under 300 yards. This word of command or warning was not introduced among us until after the last campaign. It has not yet been actually tried on active service.

“ Another kind of fire discipline has been tried by us since the last war; namely, that of swarm volleys. It seems to me, as a gunner, very advantageous to keep in hand in this way

the fire of the infantry, just as well-fought batteries act with concentrated strength. This sort of fire proved itself often very good at the manoeuvres, where the men are allowed to expend only ten or fifteen cartridges each, and where the smaller charge of the blank cartridges make less noise. But matters turned out very differently when it came to the fire of masses in field firing. The officers then, owing to the greater noise made by the ball cartridges, had to raise their voices much more if they hoped to be heard or understood; indeed most of them before the end of the practice were so hoarse that no one could understand a word they said. It is evident that this will be the case, if you realise that a section extended as skirmishers has a greater width of front than a closed company."

Practice based on sound workable principles is better than fanciful theory.

"Theoretically accurate as are all these speculations which have been started by the school of musketry, and useful as they have been in inducing us to study the nature of our rifle and of our infantry fire, there is yet some little danger that we may in time of peace be taught by them to nurse illusions, whose

non-fulfilment at the moment of battle may have a discouraging effect.

“It seems to me that a line of skirmishers which during a hot fight pays so much attention to the shrill whistle of the lieutenant, that it ceases firing for a moment, looks at him, and obeys his sign to rise and rush on, or his order to fire on another target or with another sight, proves at once that it has attained to a high degree of fire discipline. For this reason complicated things should not be practised too much, but the time should rather be employed in going over simple things hundreds and thousands of times, until they have become second nature to the men and they cannot help doing them. It is not until then that we can safely count upon their being carried out before the enemy.”

Now there are two ways of practising rifle shooting, and of testing its accuracy. One is practice at the ranges; another is practice under the conditions of warfare. Range practice is necessary, of course, because it is the foundation, but it is not the whole. The final test is accuracy in firing in the brief intervals between movements on the part of the target and of the rifleman himself.

To reach that accuracy great value is, in the modern training of the soldier, rightly attached to field practice. Field exercises form a test of the practical ability of officers as well as of the practical skill of the men. Here again the British system and the German part company. All the British infantry have during recent years been trained in the open. In the German Army a corresponding training, at all events in any sufficient sense, has been limited to the Prussian Guards and the Jaeger regiments.

This is one of the difficulties incident to passing all and sundry through the military mill in quantities. Prince Kraft saw the necessity and value of this open-air work on which since the Boer War we have laid emphasis.

While fighting in open order has become one of the most important features of infantry tactics, it demands individual self-reliance and intelligence not less than the military habit of discipline. Troops are not likely to fight well in open order unless their instruction has been thorough. Speaking of the German training, Prince Kraft says :

“With the infantry of the Guard I often saw whole companies with their recruits go out in the winter to practise field exercises,

94. MARKSMANSHIP AND FIELD WORK

and this only a few weeks after the recruits had joined, and long before they had been inspected and had been sent to do duty with their companies. In the division which I then commanded I found this practice more rare. When I had discovered the object of it, I encouraged the infantry which were under my command to do the same, and the results showed me the advantage of it.

“The man who, during the quarter of a year that he remains a recruit, sees nothing but the barrack square and his barrack room, and is employed only in the most mechanical and elementary exercises, may easily get into a stolid state of mind and make no further progress. But if he has an opportunity, once in the week, either in the morning or in the afternoon, of going out into the open to learn his field exercise, he recovers from the monotony of his elementary training, and gets an approximate idea of his work as a soldier together with a fresh desire to fit himself for it. Such excursions into the open country have as refreshing an effect as have the trips which a master makes with his scholars, when he takes the boys out of the close air of the schoolroom and teaches them practical botany. Recruits can

be taken out to these field exercises in winter as soon as they have been from a fortnight to three weeks with the colours. They may at first march in rear without arms, and may during the exercises stand in close order to mark the position of the supports, while the older soldiers act as skirmishers, patrols, etc. The instructors can then point out to their notice, almost as if it were a game, all the different items of the field exercise, which taught in theory in their hours of instruction would take a disproportionate time, since that which he can see has far more interest for any recruit than that which he has to imagine.

“ You will perhaps say that the time available for the instruction of recruits is already very short, and that it is impossible to take whole mornings and afternoons from the elementary exercises. So I thought at first. But when I inspected the recruits I asked for the daily return of drills, and found that the recruits of the very companies who had made most use of this practice, marched the best at the inspection and showed an excellent discipline at drill. This was because they were not made stupid by doing only recruits’ drill. Besides, without the recruits, no company can carry out

such practices in the winter, since the guard and fatigue duties of the garrison, in addition to the necessary musketry instruction, take too many of the men belonging to the batches of earlier years, the recruits not being yet available for garrison duty. For these reasons a captain cannot get hold of the older men more than once a week for the purpose of practising the field exercise.

“An infantry officer who has done his duty thus from the beginning and has paid attention to nothing else, does not recognise the excellence of this system and its logical development so well as an officer of another arm who, as I was myself, has been accustomed to see the foot drills carried out in masses, and is astonished to see how quickly these drills can be learnt, when they have been preceded by a careful training of the individual soldier. When a man can march well, that is to say naturally, freely, in an unconstrained manner and firmly holding himself upright, proudly and with self-confidence, when the small squads marching at three paces interval can move straight to their front and wheel well, then the drill of the complete company is a mere trifle and can be easily taught.

“How rich in results is the training of the individual soldier ! This is one answer (I say one of many) to the question which I asked in my first letter, as to whence were derived the excellence and the superiority of our infantry. An important part must be attributed to the instruction of the soldier in fighting in open order and to his habit even in this obeying the orders of his officer. Wherever this training of our soldiers has been properly made use of, there our infantry have obtained great success with comparatively small loss ; but where the officers have attached little value to fighting in open order, they have suffered loss to such a degree that success has often been doubtful, and failure might even have occurred if it had not quickly been brought into use.”

The difference, indeed, between modern training and the old barrack square ideals is fundamental. Not that the older drill had not much in it both necessary and valuable. The fault lay in considering it enough that the infantryman knew how to deploy smartly at the word of command, and to fire smartly in volleys at point-blank range ; in believing that if he could “dress ” well he knew his business.

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TRADITION

AT first sight the conclusions so far summarised would seem to be self-evident. There is, however, a powerful trend of professional tradition which either throws doubt upon them, or from sheer force of habit prefers to stand "upon the ancient ways." Very little of that is left to-day in the British Army. In the German Army, on the contrary, the conservatism of officers, fortified by the fact that they form a privileged caste, has made this force of tradition immensely strong.

If we examine it we shall find this force of tradition resting upon the conviction that the German military system, and the German Army as the outcome of it, form, taking them all round, the best things of the kind that human wit could devise.

The force of tradition was powerful before the war of 1870. Experiences in that war helped for a time to prevail against it. Nevertheless there was no root cure.

Dealing first with the qualities of the German infantry, Prince Kraft shared the view that it was, at the time he wrote, the best in the world. This conclusion was based, however, on a comparison with the infantry of the French Army. The reasoning was : French infantry is supposed to represent the highest standard ; but German infantry has proved better ; therefore German infantry must be the best.

Now the qualities of infantry, like those of other arms, consist partly of the natural value of the men as material—their native courage and warlike temperament—and partly of the skill imparted to them by training. Training, which gives unity and cohesion of action and confidence, may make relatively indifferent natural material equal in military value to good natural material untrained, or badly trained. On the other hand, it is always more difficult to train indifferent material ; and good material, when properly trained, is distinguished in the strain of battle by the coolness which men who are naturally indifferent material are apt to lose, despite every care taken with their skill and discipline. In a word, it is never possible with such troops to say that at a critical moment their morale will not break. They become then for the time a

merely unmanageable mob. Important therefore as skill and training are, this factor of common race character remains all-important. It can never be eliminated.

Prince Kraft did not assume that Germans were *naturally* better material than Frenchmen. To do so would be manifestly untrue. He attributed the superiority shown by the former in the war of 1870-1 to training and organisation. At the same time the war made the bad effects of rigid tradition only too evident.

“On reading of the exploits of the German infantry in the war of 1870-1, one comes to the conclusion, not only that it is the most perfect infantry which has yet been seen, but also that no more perfect infantry can be imagined. What though the Emperor Napoleon said, after the catastrophe of Sedan, that the German successes were due to the Prussian Ulans and the Prussian artillery, while Bazaine expresses himself in the same sense in his *Episodes*. The German cavalry undoubtedly blindfolded the eyes of the enemy, and secured for its own army the most perfect freedom of action. Again the artillery certainly was compelled often, and with success, to assume the rôle of its infantry, when our needle-guns were not as yet able to answer at long ranges

to the French chassépôt. But after all the infantry have always done the greater part of the work. Such deeds as the storming of the Geissberg at Weissenburg, of the Rothe-Berg at Spicheren, of Fröschweiler at Wörth, the advance of the infantry almost into the line of the forts at Colombey-Nouilly, the stubbornness of the infantry against the threefold numerical strength of the enemy at Vionville-Mars la Tour (where they finally retained possession of the field), and the storming of St. Privat, are heroic deeds, of which the honour rests with the infantry alone. This honour is increased tenfold by the fact that the weapon of the German infantry was a poor one compared with that of the French, and had not nearly the same range as the latter. It might indeed be objected that the German Staff had so arranged matters that in all these battles, except at Vionville-Mars la Tour, they had a numerical superiority at the decisive point. But nowhere was this superiority large enough to make up for the triple range of the enemy's weapons. For the French chassépôt inflicted sensible losses on us at 2000 paces, while the sighting of the needle-gun did not permit of its being used with effect beyond 600 paces. Thus our infantry had to cross a space of 1400 paces, suffering ever-

increasing loss, before it could defend itself, while in all these battles it assumed the offensive against prepared, and often fortified, positions of the enemy.

“But in the later campaigns of the war the Germans very soon ceased to possess this numerical superiority. The army which was set in movement against Châlons, and whose operations ended with the victory of Sedan, was even at that date only 25,000 men stronger than the force (including that of Vinoy) which MacMahon commanded ; and when the investment of Paris had begun, and fresh improvised armies were arising all around, the Germans were as a rule obliged to engage them with a strength from one-half to one-third of that of the enemy. Thus Prince Frederic Charles in the beginning of January moved with 58,097 infantry and 16,360 horses (having with artillery and pioneers a little over 80,000 combatants) against Chanzy, whose army was estimated at 250,000 men. If the situation of the Germans in France at the beginning of January, 1871, were placed as a theoretical problem before a competent military critic who had no knowledge of the war of 1870-1, but had been informed of the relative numbers of the combatants, and also that the

weapon of the French infantry had three times the range of that of the German, he would consider it as simple madness to attempt to continue the siege of Paris, and to hold at bay the enormous relieving armies. But nevertheless this was done, and with the greatest success, and was not madness at all. The victories which the German troops won everywhere forced from our great taciturn strategist the exclamation : ' What brave troops ! Send them where you will, they are always victorious ! ' Even if it be taken into consideration that almost all the enemy's troops were newly raised, and had not yet learnt to shoot well, yet we on the other hand know from the experience which we have gained from many experiments and much practice with long-range arms, that at the very long distances, up to 1600 metres or 2000 paces, there is not much difference in the percentage of hits of good and bad shots, so long as the sight is properly raised ; trained men cannot reckon on a large percentage at such long ranges. The full development of the shooting of single marksmen does not gain its entire value until the time of the decisive fight, when they can aim at individual men of the enemy, that is to say, at 450 or 550 yards or less. Now every man of the

huge masses of newly raised infantry of the enemy had a long-range rifle, and with it threw bullets into our ranks ; our infantry had need then of almost as much energy to hold their ground, and even to advance, under the long-range fire of these double and triple masses, as if this fire had been delivered by trained marksmen.

“ The more the details of the actions of this war are studied the greater will be our admiration of the deeds of our infantry, though this admiration cannot excel that which was felt by those who witnessed them at the time. Thus the question presents itself : ‘ In what did the superiority of our infantry over that of the French consist ? ’ For we cannot with certainty assert that a German is by nature braver than a Frenchman. The peculiarities of character of the two nations certainly differ, but the French have ever been held to be brave men, and their superiority over the Germans in making use of the character of the ground has been always acknowledged in the past. Napoleon I showed of what grand deeds the French soldier is capable ; Sebastopol and Solferino had obtained for the French army of the second half of our century the reputation of invincibility, and all those who in 1870 were

engaged against the old French army, before it disappeared from the scene, learnt to feel how well and stoutly they fought.

“This question was asked everywhere ; and after our last war missions from every army streamed into Germany to study our organisation and search for the causes of this superiority.

“It would have been most natural if our infantry had believed itself to be at the zenith of all perfection, and had held fixedly to its organisation.

“But on the contrary we saw with astonishment that our infantry felt the necessity of improving itself in all directions. They were not contented with demanding an arm, which should possess every technical improvement, but they also attacked the existing regulations, as being no longer appropriate. The most varied proposals were made. Who does not remember the numerous formations for action, some marvellous but most of them very good, which were tried experimentally on the Tempelhof plain near Berlin ?

“The authorities also shared the opinion as to the necessity for changes in the regulations ; a committee was assembled to revise them, and on the 1st of March, 1876, appeared a revision

of the infantry field-exercise of 1847, as a new edition, containing the changes adopted up to the 1st of March, 1876. Wonderful ! It is felt necessary, after such unheard-of successes, to change the principles of tactics ! Involuntarily the question is asked : ‘ What was wrong ? Why these changes ? What has happened ? ’ ”

German infantry tactics at the beginning of the war of 1870 were undoubtedly faulty. Mass formations were adopted in attack little different either in principle or even in detail from those followed by Frederick the Great. The result was that in the battle of St. Privat the Prussian Guards lost 8230 officers and men. The power and effect of modern guns, and more especially of the rifle, had not been taken into account. Taught by bitter experience, the German commanders before the end of the campaign altered their tactics, and at Sedan, with an equally large share in the fighting, the losses of the Guards were only 449 officers and men.

“ ‘The III army corps lost in the battle of Vionville-Mars la Tour 310 officers, 6641 men, and 677 horses, while the whole army of Prince Frederic Charles, four army corps strong (of which the III was one), and including several cavalry divisions, lost from the 4th to the 31st

of January, 1871, in almost daily actions, among which was the three days' battle of Le Mans, 229 officers, 3721 men, and 426 horses, about one-half of the loss of the III corps at Vionville. The X army corps, which took an important part in these battles and actions, lost at Vionville-Mars la Tour 202 officers, 4945 men, and 365 horses, or more than the whole losses of the II army in the whole of the month of January, 1871.'

"I do not wish to fatigue you with figures, or else I am in a position to prove the same fact with reference to every body of troops, namely, that they suffered colossal losses in the first encounters with the enemy, and later on obtained equally important results with smaller proportional loss.

"The simple, incontestable, and logical conclusion is, that some faults must have been committed in the earlier actions, which led to unnecessary losses, and which were at a later date avoided, after that the consequences of them had been painfully realised. These faults were due to no particular individuals, and entail no reproach to any one person, for they were universal and common to all; they were present in the system and in the principles

followed; thence sprang after the war the universal feeling of the need for a change in these principles and also the numerous proposals made as to the form of the change.

“It is impossible to deny that we were surprised by the long range of the chassepôt, and at first everywhere, without foreboding, marched in close columns into the zone of this fire, in a real belief that we had plenty of time before we need break up into smaller units. This we naturally did not do in the next action. But this was not the only cause of our heavy losses in the earlier combats, losses which we were able to lessen in the later battles.

“We, in addition, adopted formations for fighting in which our loss was less, leaving out of the question the fact that we avoided, by reason of the universal and general familiarity with war, many losses which novices must necessarily incur.

“After the first great battles, with their excessive losses, new formations for fight were adopted and practised. These, based as they were on sad experience, underwent practical proof. I remember a very remarkable example of this. During an attack on a village, at a late period of the war, two regiments seized that

part of the edge of the village which had been allotted to them almost without loss, while two others again suffered enormous loss. The reason was that the two last-mentioned regiments were commanded by officers who had been wounded at St. Privat, and having rejoined the force only on the day before this action, had not yet taken any part in the practice of the new formations. They fought in the old style, as they had been taught, in company columns, and again suffered colossal losses. Both these brave men were among the killed.

“ But the habit of war, the being *aguerri*, also diminishes the losses. Any one who does not know practically what this means imagines (at least, this was my case) that the habit of war is synonymous with hardening, and with indifference to all the toils and dangers of war. It is altogether the contrary ! Men who, living in a certain amount of ease, comfort, and effeminacy, have arrived at the age of 20, 30, 40, or 50 years, cannot in a few months so harden themselves that they can give all this up and expose themselves to cold, etc., without danger to their health and life. The habit of war consists in learning to procure for oneself, without increasing one's baggage to a degree

which could not be permitted, that which is absolutely necessary, considering one's rank, station, and habit of life, that is to say, necessities which have grown to be so in one's earlier days ; in guarding oneself as much as possible from the effects of bad weather ; and in avoiding in action all loss which is not absolutely called for by the object of the fight or by honour. This is even a duty. For the man who allows himself to be killed out of carelessness or bravado, when his death is unnecessary, does a wrong to his fatherland, which he thus uselessly deprives of a soldier.

“ Again we find, if we carefully compare the action of our infantry at the beginning of, and at the later periods of, the campaign, certain customs and habits which led to great loss and which were later on abandoned. These habits and customs, which are the result of a long peace, will always take root again, if attention be not constantly drawn to the fact that on active service such things cannot be.

“ It is well worth the trouble to search out, down to the smallest detail, what constituted these faults, which were then committed and were later on avoided, and what were the good qualities of our infantry, which, in spite of

these faults and in spite of the enormously superior arm of the enemy, secured such grand results."

The relatively lighter losses of seasoned or experienced troops here referred to, in proportion to the results achieved, is an experience of every campaign. They emphasise the value of the system adopted in recent years by the British Army of giving training a practical bias. Where the bias is towards theory rather than practice, towards the showy side of war rather than to its realities, not only regimental officers, but those of higher rank are led to look in battle for results which are purely fantastic.

But as the experiences of the war of 1870 faded, the old creeping paralysis of inert tradition, fortified by caste, came back. It began to be felt again not long after the war. By the time the present war broke out it had ossified almost the whole system. In uttering a warning against it, Prince Kraft was emphatic :

" You will perhaps find it presumptuous that I, a gunner by profession, should criticise so excellent an infantry and dare to offer it advice. But criticism of, and advice to, infantry has been during seven years my duty as commanding a division. Moreover in the first year of my

command I industriously attended the recruits' drill ; I was annually present at all inspections of recruits of an entire brigade, at the company training of at least three regiments, and at the battalion training of the whole division. I can thus, assisted by what I have seen in war (and including battles and sieges I have been on 60 different days under the fire of the enemy), form a confident judgment with regard to infantry, and one the more impartial and the more unbiassed that it cannot be clouded by old habits. Far be it from me to undervalue tradition. Tradition is founded on old experiences, but he who follows the tradition knows nothing of these experiences. The great mass of people continue to do what they have always done, and ordinary men follow gladly the dear track of habit. Since, however, the experiences have been forgotten which formed the basis for the tradition which every one follows, he who breaks with a tradition is in danger of destroying one based on good grounds, and may later on have to renew the old experiences in some unpleasant manner, and then to recall the old tradition, if there be yet time. For many things it will then be too late, especially for such as have to do with discipline. And when the

discipline of an infantry is slackened, then, alas ! good-bye to all great successes ! I can therefore only recognise the deep wisdom with which those in high authority interfere but very slowly and gradually with whatever is rendered sacred by custom.

“ But there exist traditions which arise from the experiences of a time when we fought with quite other tactics. Line-tactics, in which soldiers were used only as machines, in which the infantryman was only food for powder, in which a private was more afraid of a blow with a stick than he was of a bullet, such tactics must beget customs and habits which can in these days bear no good fruit. And yet, because that time was full of glory, we still have, at least in a part of the army, not perhaps regulations, but traditions, with which we might easily dispense.

“ Again traditions grow out of the conditions which obtain in peace, when to work up for inspections and manœuvres is regarded as the supreme object of effort. This ought not to be, but so it is, and finds its origin deep in human nature. The man who is the very best soldier in the field, if in peace he is constantly getting into trouble, must arouse in his superiors a suspicion that he has fallen from his former

efficiency, and is no longer what he was. He also must therefore, if he wishes to continue to serve, work up for inspection, etc. Such traditions we ought to fight against with all our might ; we must not allow them to spring up, and when we come across them must throw them utterly aside, so that at inspections we may demand before all other things only that which is truly useful ; but that must be rigid, exact,—as rigid and exact as possible. It is also the duty of inspectors to so direct their inspections that it may be impossible merely to ‘ work up ’ for them.

“ I will now relate to you, as an example, one single tradition, which I came across when I commanded a regiment. I discovered, when I saw the recruits drilling in ragged clothing, that the batteries drilled their recruits in the winter in tunics and trousers which had been condemned and had been handed over to them as material for repairs. I forbade this by a regimental order. A captain of a battery, who had been long on the most intimate terms with me, said to me confidentially in private : ‘ You have given me an order which I shall oppose ; if I obey it and the other captains do not, I shall wear out my clothing and they will keep theirs

new ; then at the inspection I shall be blamed and they will be praised. We shall all therefore, when you are not there to see, drill our recruits in condemned clothing.' 'What will you do,' said I, 'if I have the clothing unpicked ?' 'Then we shall tell the company tailors to make them up again.' 'But suppose,' said I, 'that I give you only half trousers and half tunics ?' After thinking a moment he said, 'We should be done there.'

"This was done. From that time when the batteries wanted to condemn 10 tunics and 10 pairs of trousers as material for repairs, they had to return these articles into store, and then received from the quartermaster, one 20 right legs of trousers and 10 right halves of tunics, another the corresponding left arms and legs. The appearance of the regiment was thus much improved.

"You will perhaps laugh at such details. But the grandest and the most beautiful building is composed of comparatively small and unimportant stones, and falls altogether to the ground, if these little stones are not worked and joined with proper care."

Despite this warning, the tactics in which soldiers are used merely as machines have

proved to be as dominant in the German Army as they ever were ; and it is putting it moderately to say that half a million German killed and wounded have demonstrated the deadly consequences of this unprogressive spirit.

CHAPTER VIII

TYRANNY OF THEORY *v.* POWER OF PRACTICE

A FEATURE of the German system is that it is governed by an elaborate code of Regulations which lay down minutely not only the courses of instruction, but instructions hardly less minute for handling men in battle. The latter instructions are supposed to embody the summarised results of a body of experience. It is important, of course, that all theory of the Science of War should be founded on experience. Theory not founded on experience can have little value. On the other hand, the actual circumstances of battle rarely correspond with purely theoretical conceptions. In the sagacious application of theory there is always room for initiative. While the soldier, and especially the soldier of commissioned rank, must have a grasp of the leading principles of tactics, it is not less necessary that he should by practice in field exercises be able in applying those principles to test at the same time his own initiative and resource, for the

duty of every officer is to obtain the results embodied in his orders with the least possible loss to his men. To embody the theory therefore in elaborate and detailed regulations, rather than in a set of principles and suggestions which can be clearly grasped and applied to a wide range of varying emergencies, must obviously tend to fetter initiative and to favour a doctrinaire rather than a practical outlook.

The Prussian Regulations revised in 1847 were again, in the light of the war of 1870-1, and its heavy initial losses, subjected to a general revision completed in 1876. Since then there have been various revisions embodying reforms, among them reforms advocated by Prince Kraft. Still, in substance, the present-day Regulations are not widely different from those of thirty-eight years ago.

To master this code takes months of study. In part it represents a fondness for elaborate organisation, in which the workable is sacrificed for the systematic, and is in that respect not unlike the 4000 or so police by-laws of Berlin.

But also in part it is a product of the system of trying to train men on wholesale lines. As a conception "The Nation in Arms" is all very well, but when it comes to realising a nation of

efficient soldiers, the ideal is soon found to be one thing and the real quite another.

In 1813, when Scharnhorst hit upon this idea, Prussia, struck down and dominated by France, was prohibited from keeping a regular army of more than 45,000 men. Universal service was introduced as a means of evading the spirit while keeping the letter of that obligation, and it was willingly accepted because it offered the prospect of throwing off the French yoke. But after the fall of Napoleon this aspect of universal service was by degrees lost sight of, and the Prussian Army, on its new basis, was more and more regarded, and as far as possible shaped, into an engine of aggression. As such an engine it was used successively against Saxony, Denmark, Hanover, and Austria. The contest in all these instances was with other armies formed on the same footing, but none of them so carefully organised. Still more was the war of 1870 against France the triumph of a good over a bad organisation, each based on the same leading principle. The Prussians, however, accepted that war as the triumph of their idea.

Of the various grounds on which Prince Kraft attacked the German Regulations, one of the most serious was the authorisation in peace

training of formations different from those intended to be employed in battle. Not only was time spent in learning movements merely for show purposes, but there was a tendency to favour these because they contributed to apparent smartness. The view of the critic was that one set of movements, those employable in actual operations, should alone be learned. Let merely apparent smartness go in favour of real expertness. This has been one of the lessons learned by the British, and also to a great extent by the French military authorities. But the influence of usage and tradition in the German Army was too strong.

“The new regulations were founded upon the whole progress of long-range weapons. The elasticity of the regulations, the freedom which is permitted to every one as to the formation to use in any particular case, the margin which is allowed with regard to the intervals between closed bodies of troops and the firing line, and above all the formal order that the instructions contained in them are alone to be observed (which forbids the narrowing directions of other authorities), renders it possible for leaders in war to select always that which is right, and to adapt their movements to

the ground and to the dispositions of the enemy.”

So far so good, but it is one thing to lay down new regulations and another to induce men brought up on a different tradition to adopt their *spirit* as well as to follow their letter.

“Another wish, which I cannot refrain from expressing, is yet more important. When I consider that the formation in which our infantry will in future generally fight at the most decisive moments is a line of skirmishers, it is in my opinion of no importance whatever whether the closed formation, in which the supports and the columns move, is in two or in three ranks. I therefore think that we might return to one single formation for all closed bodies of infantry.”

There was, however, as the present war has proved, a body of German tacticians who held that, despite modern arms, the decisive action of infantry must still take place in closely formed masses. Men of a practical turn like Prince Kraft wanted to be rid of this craze for showy complications and stick to business.

“But the men of ‘the good old school’ and those zealous persons who take them as a pattern, practise it enthusiastically at company drill

with every possible complication. You may hear the words of command given in the following order : ‘ Column on the right ! ’ then ‘ Quick March ! ’ then ‘ Form company column ! ’ ‘ By sections wheel ! ’ ‘ Form the third rank ! ’ ‘ Right-about turn ! ’ ‘ Form company column ! ’ ‘ Quick March ! ’ ‘ Left turn ! ’ and then again, ‘ Form the third rank ! ’ and all sorts of similar ingenious fancies, which are found only on the drill ground, being the product of a heated brain, which is itself the consequence of cold feet. When a drill instructor of this kind did not succeed, by means of the most extraordinary combinations, in getting his men into a state of hopeless confusion, his face shone with the same delight as is felt by the victor in a pitched battle. When I saw this sort of thing, I could not help praising the zeal of the drill instructor and the longsuffering of the men, but neither could I help asking : ‘ What on earth is the use of it all ? ’ I was generally told that its object was to make the men smart. But some old drill instructors who had carried out these manœuvres from their youth up, while they still retained the conviction that drill ought to be the means of training men for battle, have acknowledged that a change of formation made in step had no

effect whatever in making the men smart. They simply called it 'a proof of drill,' carried out in order to throw dust into people's eyes, and confessed that it was liable to fail at once, if the specially drilled flank men of sections were changed (for example, if the right-hand man of the company was sick); they drilled for the pleasure of drilling. A great deal of time and trouble was thus wasted upon a practice which did not in the least improve the men. But this waste of time would no longer take place if we had only one kind of formation. A far better way to make the men smart at drill is by often drilling the company as is laid down in para. 43 of the regulations, without keeping each man to his one special place in the ranks; unfortunately you very seldom see this done."

A concrete example was afforded by the time lost in practising the march-past in formations impossible in actual operations. In that respect German infantry have usually caused uninformed spectators to gape with admiration. Their mechanical precision, thanks to incessant hammering into shape, was wonderful. What force could resist such "perfectly trained" troops, who at the sound of the whistle moved

forward or halted in great masses as one man ? But all this was gained at the expense of real efficiency, for the time spent upon it was so much time taken off the training that mattered.

“ Another suggestion which I should offer, if I ever sat on a committee on the regulations, would be the suppression of the ‘ Shoulder arms ! ’ The Austrian infantry prove to us that it is possible to come from the ‘ Slope ’ to the ‘ Present,’ while sentries might, as in Austria, salute by presenting instead of by shouldering arms. The march-past with shouldered arms should also be given up. If you wonder why I am an enemy of the system of shouldering arms, I will ask you to watch recruits at drill and convince yourself how much time and trouble it takes to teach the soldier this motion, and how much skill is needed, that firstly, the butts shall not be too far to the front and thus spoil the whole appearance of the ranks, and secondly, that the rifle shall not, owing to the butts being too far to the rear, overbalance from the shoulder and lean to the front. Now as to the march-past with shouldered arms ! Though with the greatest care and trouble the troops have been taught a good, free, natural, and easy march, we shall find that, owing to the discomfort of

carrying the arms at the shoulder, and owing to the balance which must be preserved in order that the right hand may hold the small of the butt and not the knob of the lock, the step will become shorter, more constrained, and more tiring ; this will be caused principally by the tendency of the men to lean backwards, in order that the rifles may rest against their shoulders. Marching with shouldered arms must therefore be practised hundreds and hundreds of times before it can become free and natural. What an immense amount of valuable time, which might be usefully employed, is lost in this !

“ With the same object of saving time by abolishing such things as appear to me to be of no use, I should lay down that the manual exercise, wheels, and dressing by the rear should be practised at company drill only. The regulations already forbid closed columns to be used for drill or inspection by any body of troops larger than a company. If only this prohibition might be extended to the manual exercise, wheels, and dressing by the rear ! We now not only see the officer commanding a battalion assiduously practising the manual exercise and wheels with his own battalion

(which indeed he must do, since it is so ordered in the regulations), but we even find brigadiers who have a taste for that sort of thing making all their six battalions do the manual exercise simultaneously in such a manner that the whole brigade shall move together. There is nothing about this in the regulations, and yet you may often see it done. The officers commanding regiments and battalions must fully rehearse this with their commands, in order that all may go smartly. I at one time thought that it was a proof of a narrow mind, when I found a brigadier practising this sort of thing, but I have seen some men do it who were well known to be intelligent; when I put to them my constant and very annoying question: 'What is the use of it?' I received the answer that it was traditional and that every brigadier did it. A great deal of time is thus also put to waste."

The nearest approach in the German Army to the British standard is afforded by the Prussian Guard. Enrolment in the regiments of the Guard is an honour, sought after as a social distinction. It was the idea of Prince Kraft to see the whole of the German infantry brought up to the Guards' level.

“ In such a highly educated and willing body as is the Prussian corps of officers it is only necessary to suggest anything, and the efforts of all the junior officers will certainly help most willingly to complete it and bring it to perfection. So I found in this case. The infantry of the Guard had already abolished the balance step, my officers went further, and replaced, as a preparation to marching, the slow march by gymnastic exercises and worked back to the former from the quick march, just as in the case of a remount the short trot and the medium trot are developed from the natural pace. The success was most visible. Up to that time it had been found very difficult to teach the small Silesian men to take such long steps as those required by the regulations, namely, 100 to 80 metres. It was now found that the recruits could at the inspections in the barrack square march 80 metres without difficulty in from 82 to 90 paces ; one company had even taught its recruits to step metres. The men, being accustomed to such long paces, had no difficulty at a later date carrying their packs and moving over uneven ground, in marching with the regulation pace of four-fifths of a metre, and developed a power of marching which often on

the occasion of the manœuvres astonished both the superior officers and the spectators. It is moreover natural that the slow march with the balance step should tend to shorten a man's stride, instead of making the recruit stretch his legs, for when he has to stand for a moment on one foot with the other extended in front of him, he is obliged to throw his weight on the rear foot, and this shortens the pace when the advanced foot comes to the ground. Again the slow march, with the balance step, is an unnatural movement, which causes pain to the recruit in proportion as his muscles are wanting in pliancy. It must be quite wrong to begin with the most difficult practice ; while, when a man has once learnt to march in quick time, the other paces are of no use. In former days these two kinds of marching were practised for choice by such instructors of recruits as had nothing to think of, who looked stupidly to their front, mechanically and slowly repeating : ' 21-22.' Thus it happened that a tortured, though willing, recruit, driven to despair by the pain in his cramped muscles, would throw his rifle on the ground or at his instructor's head, and then had to be punished by law for such insubordination."

The "goose" step, not without its utility up to a point, was abused because it was showy. It was part of a tendency to scamp useful work in order to score at inspections.

Of course there is the other extreme in which you might have an admirable lot of skirmishers, up to every ruse of guerilla warfare, but incapable of acting together in compact units. It is a case, of course, of striking the happy mean in which men learn unity of action through drill, but in addition to and without destroying that, the self-reliance and coolness that spring from individual skill. In a word, the main defect of the German system has been that, so far as regards the rank and file, it has tended to crush out character.

Prince Kraft wanted the Regulations cut down to what was strictly necessary. He preferred to have strictly necessary Regulations fully carried out, rather than elaborate Regulations honoured in the omission rather than in the observance.

"It is entirely because I am anxious that the details of the regulations should be more strictly carried out that I should like to see these regulations cut down to what is strictly necessary, so that they might be worked out and studied as

exactly as possible by the very smallest units, and that thus the elementary portion of the exercises might reach its climax in the company, instead of, as at present, in the battalion. For the manner of fighting which has become necessary, owing to the improvements in fire-arms, allows us no longer to work or to deal with the battalion, of which the place is taken by the company, as we may learn from the plan of any battle and from the maps in the official account. The company has thus become the practical tactical unit, though for the sake of convenience we still reckon by battalions, for the reason that a company has too little fire power to last and melts away too quickly in battle. The careful training of the company should therefore be a matter of the greatest solicitude, since the drill of the battalion goes a little above elementary, and more or less enters upon the sphere of applied, tactics.

“ For this reason I have always maintained that the drill of a company should occupy itself rather with the ‘ how ’ than with the ‘ what,’ whereas in the exercise of a battalion the opposite is the case. The officer commanding a company very rarely finds himself in war in a position to make great tactical, and still less

strategical, evolutions. His objective, whether in the offensive or the defensive, is as a rule very clearly marked out for him. But the struggle, so far as he can influence it, is decided by *how* he carries out his work, by how his men take advantage of the ground, how they find cover, how they shoot, and whether they hit, and how they obey his signals and orders with regard to advancing, lying down, aiming, and the nature of fire. The more therefore that the centre of gravity of the struggle rests upon the independent action of individuals, the more do we need discipline, by which I mean that intelligent obedience which welds this independence of many individuals into a concentrated whole, and into a real power. Have we not all quite recently received a proof that all the inventions of modern times, breech-loaders, mitrailleuses, and rifled guns, are useless against that most primitive weapon, the spear, when no discipline governs their action. I refer to the annihilation of Baker's troops at Suakim. For we cannot assert that an Egyptian is a coward by nature. The armies of Mehemet Ali and of Ibrahim have proved the contrary in the first half of this century."

For the view that with modern firearms the

company rather than the battalion should become the practical tactical unit there is much to be said. As military science advances, and the boundaries of practical skill widen, it is evident both that the duties of captains become more onerous, and that the difficulty and responsibility of commanding a battalion increase. Any old soldier will tell you that he was still learning when his time expired.

This is a very important matter. It is certain that in making the battery of Artillery the practical tactical unit instead of the regiment, the British system has heightened the efficiency of that Arm in our own service. Under the British system it is "up to" every battery to reach the standard, and the Arm has become solid in its uniformly high skill. To what an extent a fact like that counts in battle can readily be inferred. Able to calculate on the *full effect* of his guns, a general in command can make dispositions with the knowledge that they will not turn out badly. That, again, must influence the way in which, in conjunction with his guns, he handles his infantry; while the dispositions of his artillery and his infantry together will affect the employment of his cavalry.

This shows how a sound principle of organisation may contribute to win battles.

While, of course, nothing like so highly technical an Arm as the Artillery, Infantry using the modern magazine rifle are nevertheless, properly looked at, technically skilled men. There are, however, admittedly some serious objections to making the company rather than the battalion the recognised unit. Unless it can be *proved* that the change would increase efficiency, the necessity of cohesion and momentum in infantry action points to the battalion unit as the workable basis.

CHAPTER IX

INFLUENCE OF OFFICERS

PRINCIPLES of training, tradition, regulations all have their influence and effect on a military system, and accordingly as they are sound or unsound the system, as a system, will be good or bad. But when everything under each and all of these heads is said, there yet remains another formative force of the greatest consequence—the character as a body of the officers.

It is not too much to claim that the character of its officers stamps an army more deeply than any other influence. They it is who have to apply principles. They carry out regulations. They, as a body, form the traditions. For while with the rank and file, even the rank and file of a professional army, the period of service is limited, and still more limited in a universal service army, the officer's period of service ends only with his active life. Men in the ranks come and go ; he remains. The Army is not only his

profession, but his ideal. The recruit enters into a new atmosphere. It may be a bracing atmosphere or it may be depressing. It may strengthen the recruit's character, or grind his character down to a dead level of monotony. This atmosphere largely the officers create, for upon the officers depends the selection of the N.C.O.'s. The officers may make a military system excellent. On the other hand, they may dig its grave.

In nothing has the British Army been more marked than by the value attached in it to individual character. There is scope for character in all ranks, but in the commissioned ranks character is the one quality without which no soldier can hope to succeed. Men of British stock are proverbially hard to command. They "won't be drove." There are, however, none who so instantly recognise fitness to command, and when to superiority in education and professional knowledge is joined a gallant generosity in recognising merit, and a sense of justice, the obedience of the rank and file passes into an affectionate fidelity which gives the military foundations of the British Army the solidity of rock.

Happily the qualities here referred to are

in British officers so usual that it is their absence which excites remark. The work of the British regimental officer below field rank is no sinecure. He is not only responsible for the efficiency of his half-company or company in the matter of drill, but for its efficiency in musketry, and for the way in which, these two forms of efficiency being combined, it can carry out the field practice in which the combination is tested, a practice calling on the part of company officers for readiness of resource, decision, and real ability.

Through the relatively high standard of marksmanship now aimed at, and the adoption of field practice as a regular part of infantry training, the British footman not only learns the necessity of being a first-rate shot, but realises the value of the evolutions he has been practising on the parade ground.

In field practice, too, a captain forms a more complete and better judgment of his men. He has to study their characteristics ; to get the best out of them they can, in a military sense, give ; to set the tone of the company ; and to keep its pride in its quality up to the mark. To him they look as a little clan looks to its chief, and they take as great a pride in his resource, as he takes in their fitness.

Until lately there still lingered a belief that the commissioned ranks of the British Army form a refuge for wealthy idlers. The belief, at any rate to-day, is utterly baseless. The new generation of officers are hard-working men.

Just as regimental officers are commissioned and non-commissioned, so commissioned officers are either regimental or of field rank. The latter form in the professional sense the senior branch. Professionally the greatest step up is promotion to the command of a unit ; from a captaincy to a majority. Between the officer who commands a battalion and the general who commands an army, the difference is really a difference of degree. The junior officer's relations are with his men. The senior officer has to deal firstly with the officers under his direction.

Command of a unit is an onerous and responsible post, and it is evident that the efficiency of an army must greatly depend upon the way in which the higher ranks are filled, for the traditions which exercise so powerful an influence on the *morale* of a unit are largely built up through the character and spirit of its past and present senior officers.

The commandant of a battalion has to weld the companies into a unit by seeing that they

138 THE INFLUENCE OF OFFICERS

reach a common standard, and to train them to act together as a unit. He must have a grasp of the larger aspects of field tactics, and exercise on a higher plane the knowledge and experience he has gained as a captain. Before admission to field rank he has a stiff professional examination to face. His holding of an "independent" command is a severe test of fitness, and it is not surprising that the greatest care is taken to guard against mistakes in awarding this, the great prize of every junior officer's ambition, and the door to all higher professional honours.

Corporals put squads through their first facings; sergeants instruct their sections in the next steps of the training; lieutenants take their half-companies another stage forward, and the captain polishes up the whole company into the finished article. At every stage the work grows more interesting, but also heavier in its demands of insight and initiative.

In the German Army the value of the non-commissioned officer is less recognised than in ours, and the distance between the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks is emphasised. Promotions from non-commissioned to commissioned rank were, until the present war

made them necessary, rare exceptions and against the spirit of the system. The result was that the non-commissioned officer was not unnaturally inclined to make up for the slights put upon him by "passing it on" to the men. Not only was this hurtful to efficiency by discouragement, but it was bad for efficiency by throwing on the commissioned officers work which, in the British Army, the non-commissioned officers do, and do well. Thus the whole weight of the grind fell under the German system on the commissioned officers of junior rank.

Of the German regimental officer Prince Kraft has drawn an interesting portrait :

"The captain of the company and the lieutenant are in fact the soul of the whole of the instruction and execution of infantry duty. This is certainly the case in the other arms also, but the very circumstance that, while in the cavalry the strength of a body of troops is counted by horses, and in the artillery by guns, in the infantry alone it is reckoned by men, shows at once that in the latter arm the human physical element is the only important one, and that the influence of their leader on individual men has greater prominence in the

infantry. But this influence, this guidance of individual minds, is exercised by the captain and his lieutenants, that is to say, by the company officers. The N.C. officers are merely an aid to them, carry out what they order, and derive from them their authority ; while the higher ranks are too far separated from the men, and, owing to the great number of individuals under them, cannot possibly know the peculiarities of each. The company officer alone knows Tom and Harry, or Atkins and Smith. He has instructed him, praised or blamed him, and rewarded or punished him. This is why the soldier confidently follows his officer in battle, and it is his immediate commander who electrifies him and makes him do great deeds. Who has not seen many examples of this in war ?

“ Every infantry officer who has been in action could give you plenty of them, all showing how in our army the company officer is the soul of the infantry, that he breathes his spirit into them, and with what unlimited confidence our men follow their officers. General von Rüchel said even in the last century : ‘ The spirit of the Prussian Army is in its officers,’ and this maxim is even more true now, when the fighting

masses of infantry must at the decisive moment break up into their smallest units, such as can be guided only by the voice of a lieutenant ; so much so, that whereas I in my second letter said that there were good grounds for asserting that not the Prussian schoolmaster but the Prussian N.C. officer won our battles, I am now almost inclined to say that our victories were due neither to the schoolmaster nor the N.C. officer, but to the Prussian subaltern. The lieutenant is indeed during peace, year out and year in, the schoolmaster of the men.

“ But let us to-day confine ourselves specially to the lieutenant, or rather to the company officer (including the captain) of infantry, and let us ask ourselves the question : Whence comes this influence on the masses which generates marvels of courage, and is so powerful that they obey his signs in the greatest danger, even when the dispersion of closed bodies, which is due to the new mode of fighting, renders it impossible to watch and control each individual man ? It arises from the indefatigable activity of the officer, from his spotless honour, and from his Spartan self-denial.

“ There used to be times of peace during which an officer appeared to have nothing

more to do than to go on guard, to drill in the spring and summer for a few hours of each day, and to run across country at the manœuvres. In those days the lieutenant had many nick-names, such as 'street-trotter,' some of which the people still keep up. But when do you now see a lieutenant strolling up and down the street? If you see him at all it will be only at midday, when he, while the men are at dinner, is on his way to breakfast at some *café* or confectioner's (for his dinner hour is 3 or 4 p.m.), or perhaps on Sunday, when he is paying visits to his friends. At all other times, from early in the morning to late in the evening, he is hard at work.

"When the sun shows itself above the horizon he has to look after his men to see that they are clean and that everything is in order, and also to give them instruction on such points if they need it. After that he has to teach and drill each individual man in various details. Gymnastics and drill, the handling of arms and musketry, field service and interior economy, he has to teach them all, while in each of them he must be a model to the men, since they will not learn anything unless the officer knows it better than they do. In this manner he is hard

at work during the whole day. Any one who only now and then, as he passes by, glances at the drill ground, may perhaps think that these simple exercises can easily be learnt in a few hours. The infantry officer knows how much trouble and work they need, and any one who, without prejudice, has read my earlier letters, will acknowledge it, even though he is not a soldier, especially when he thinks of how much time must be given to musketry instruction. A company fires from 15,000 to 20,000 rounds per annum at a target, and not a single shot may be fired unless an officer be present ; he is responsible for all measures of precaution, and each shot must be entered under his eyes in the practice report. A company has rarely more than two officers available for this duty. What a demand this must make upon the nerves, the stamina, and the sense of duty of an officer, for he must never weary and never allow his attention to wander, while he has to stand for many hours together in all kinds of weather, in winter as well as in summer, in snow and frost, as well as in sweltering heat, and shot after shot, has to watch the manner in which a man aims, to see that all due precautions are taken, and that each score is correctly entered. For if there is the

slightest neglect, an accident may easily happen, and then the responsible officer will be sent before a court-martial. Moreover, he often has to carry out this duty against the will, and under the opposition, of the civilian population, and even of the civil authorities. For it has sometimes happened that the local authorities have presumed officially to forbid the continuation of the practice, because some rifle has been by accident fired up into the air, and the ground behind the butts is not considered safe. Indeed, the zone of infantry fire is now very deep. We have had men wounded in action by chance shots, at a range of 4000 paces from the enemy's skirmishing line.

“Many people imagine that a lieutenant is at leisure when he has completed his work of the morning and the afternoon, and goes to his dinner at 4 p.m. On the contrary! Hardly has he finished his dinner than he has to give theoretical instruction to either the N.C. officers or the men. The soldier in the *Fliegender Blätter* certainly says that theoretical instruction is that which is not practical, but a subaltern laughs at this as a good joke, all the more heartily that he knows that it is only exceptionally true. In military matters this kind of instruction is

absolutely necessary, while it is not confined to military matters only. Many things are taught which are of the greatest use to a man when he leaves the service, while the few men who join unable to read or write are then taught to do so. Many men learn more with their regiment than they did during the whole of their time at school. I remember when I was a lieutenant, we had a recruit whose education had been totally neglected, but who was otherwise clever enough ; I taught him reading, writing, and arithmetic, and he became first a sergeant, and afterwards a paymaster's clerk. The results obtained by regimental instruction are far more marked than those of any school, since the average age of the men is over twenty years, and they therefore work harder, and understand better the use of instruction than school children do. For this reason also they feel more attachment to the instructor of their riper years, and are willing to follow his orders through toil and danger, if only he will set them the example.

“ But even this is not all that a subaltern has to do. In addition to the duties of his profession he must study that profession itself. He must exercise himself at gymnastics, he must read, he must speak at discussions, in addition to attend-

ing among the audience at all regimental meetings, he must send in memoranda on various subjects, and must take a part in the tactical war-game. His evenings, after he has finished the instruction of the men, are three or four times a week employed in this manner, so that the remaining evenings only are available for recreation and for intercourse with his family or his comrades. The demands made upon the subaltern officers are increasing to such an extent that when one of them succeeds in getting into the War Academy, he looks upon the time spent there in earnest and hard study as a relaxation from the burden of regimental duty.

“But of the company officers the captain is even harder worked than the subaltern. He shares all the fatigue of his officers, and while the latter have to do special duties, he has to go from one to the other to supervise them, and, in the case of the inexperienced younger subalterns, to instruct them and teach them their work. When he returns home to his family, or hopes for an hour of rest, his sergeant-major appears and reports to him, to-day some crime which he must carefully inquire into, punish, and enter in the defaulters’ book, and to-morrow some question connected with pay.

On another day he must go to the clothing-store to issue uniform, or perhaps he has to stop disorderly conduct in the barrack rooms ; for down to the smallest detail he is answerable for everything which concerns his company, and must have everything at this fingers' end. It has thus become a proverb that the life of an officer commanding a company is not his own, since he never has time to enjoy it.

“ But these exertions and fatigues would not of themselves alone enable the officer to obtain such an enormous influence over the mass of his men, if he did not cling so fast as he does to his stainless honour, and unless the private soldier knew that he could entirely trust himself to this spotless honour of his officer. The soldier recognises that in this respect the officer is superior to him ; he does not ask the officer to set him a good example, for he knows that he will do so, and that to maintain this honour he will always be to the front in danger ; thence arises a feeling of attachment, and of the impossibility of leaving his officer in the lurch, and thence also that spirit among the men which finds its expression in ‘ When the lieutenant runs to the front, we must run with him.’ I should have to write volumes if I wished to

state how far the influence of the sense of honour among the officers extends in this respect, while to do so to you would be to carry owls to Athens. The elevated standpoint which the honour of an officer occupies is the object of the highest esteem on the part of all educated civilians, and the object of the envy of all those who desire to destroy our existing social and political institutions. How they rejoice and shout when, quite as an exception, it happens that one or another out of the tens of thousands disgraces himself. How full the papers are of it for a long time, and how vainly do they endeavour to involve the whole service in the shame. Vainly, I say, for the service is stainless. It casts out such an individual from its ranks without any regard to consequences, and without ever allowing him to return ; and it gains in position by this openness and disregard of consequences, since it does not hypocritically display a mere outward garment of honour, but clearly shows its inward determination to hold fast to its reputation.

“There can be no better evidence of the spotless honour of officers as a class than the bitter hatred of such men as, being themselves destitute of all honour, wish to destroy every-

thing which the bonds of the family and the Fatherland have hallowed. But we ask those who, even though they are not military men, yet desire the stability of these bonds, to give a noble answer. We hear much of the envy which is felt of the privileged class of officers, yet every citizen is proud if he can number an officer among the members of his family, and every one is glad to receive an officer into his house, while every place which officers frequent is, from that fact alone, assumed to be one where a good tone prevails.

“ I know very well that as far as regards the question of honour there is no difference between officers of infantry and those of the other arms, and I hope that the latter will not blame me for having spoken especially of the infantry while touching on this point. For the officers of infantry are in the greatest number, and, moreover, they are the best examples of the third reason upon which the influence of the officers over the men depends, i.e. in their Spartan self-denial, while this self-denial, necessitating great efforts, is an expression of their sense of honour. There are certainly many officers in the cavalry who are as frugal as those of the infantry, but we find as a rule that officers who are well off prefer

the cavalry, and these do not have to exercise the same self-denial.

“ On the other hand, the greater number of infantry officers are poor, sadly poor, and the pay which recompenses their ceaseless activity is extremely small, so small that the greatest statesman of his time among us spoke, when he was a deputy, of the ‘ splendid misery ’ of a subaltern. Even now the pay of a lieutenant is so exceedingly scanty that any one who does not receive assistance from his family undergoes the most bitter privations, which he endures silently in his quarters, while publicly he keeps up the position of his rank.

“ It cannot be denied that many families, when they allow their sons to select a military career, contrive by some means to give them assistance in money as long as they are subalterns. But many cannot do this. I have known young officers who joined from the Cadet Corps, whose mothers, themselves the widows of officers, could once and for all assist them in their new rank with only the sum of fifteen shillings and an old coat belonging to their father ; others I have known, of a good, old, and noble family, who had not even these fifteen shillings, and whose sisters counted upon some assistance from their

pay as lieutenants. Thus it happens sometimes that an officer who has in the evening been invited to tea with a family shows such an appetite for bread and butter as amuses every one, while later on, when things are going better with him, he may, perhaps, own that the reason that he was so hungry on that evening was that, being very hard up, he had eaten nothing all that day. It is scarcely necessary to say that these officers freeze in their rooms, for they have no money to buy fuel, and that they do not wear their cloaks in the coldest weather, because if they did they would wear out their coats too quickly ; they give out that they dislike to wear such warm clothes. But if it is a question of appearing in the streets or on parade, or if he has to go into society, then our Spartan is the best dressed and the gayest of all. Do not tell me that there are exceptions to this rule, and that there are officers who, infected with the generally prevailing love of pleasure, waste their money, and the property of their families, and at last come to grief. How could it be possible but that here and there an officer should suffer from the prevailing epidemic ? But the exceptions prove the rule, while the sensation which such exceptions excite is the greatest possible proof

that we expect Spartan manners in our subalterns, and that we find them.

“ Indeed a lieutenant is very badly paid. A skilled artisan, whether he be a locksmith, a cabinet-maker, a turner, or a shoemaker, earns more in a week than a subaltern, to say nothing of such trades as require special technical knowledge, and which are far better paid. Why then is it that our Spartan does his duty ? Why does he expend the cost of his elementary instruction, which would fit him for any other career ; why does he show an extraordinary and unresting activity in peace ; why does he give his blood and his life in war ; when after all this he can expect no recompense ? He is influenced only by his desire for fame and glory, and by the high position which the spotlessness of his true honour wins for him in the society of all men.

“ So long as the rank of an officer holds, even in the case of lieutenants, this exceptionally honourable position, which in spite of his youth gives him the entry into all circles of society, so long will it retain its force of attraction for the most cultured classes. If this position were taken away the very highest rates of pay would not make good the harm done, for gold can never

take the place of honour. He who lives only for money and pleasure may say with Falstaff : ' What is honour ? Air ! '

" The above-mentioned honourable position which the rank of officer holds in general society in Germany is naturally a subject of envy to all other professions, and that rank is therefore, especially up to within the last twenty years, distasteful to them. After the attacks which were made upon it had failed of their effect, an endeavour was made to turn it into ridicule. This animosity has latterly much decreased.

" It is certainly true that the typical figure of the ornamental lieutenant of the Guard still exists ; he still twists his sprouting moustache, speaks through his nose, and cannot see without a glass in his eye. He still appears now and then on the scene, and makes one's sides ache with laughing, whether or not he wears the lace of the Guard ; but as a matter of fact he has nearly disappeared. When here and there he does come to light, as a sort of excrescence of exaggerated regard for honour and elegance, experience has taught us that men like him are exactly those who, in moments of danger or in the midst of fatigues and hardships, make it a point of honour to prove themselves good men

and to show well to the front. So, though we may laugh at the comic side of the man, we must admire the very extravagance of his feelings."

Now it is fortunate for the British Army that British officers do not belong to a *privileged* profession ; but sustain the influence of their profession by their character alone. Looking at it purely from a military standpoint, the influence of privilege is bad. It fosters a spirit of caste, and a spirit of caste is unprogressive. We touch here perhaps the most serious of all the flaws in the German system. In modern Germany the *profession* of a soldier has tended to become hereditary in certain families, numerous no doubt, but still limited in number. Merit and character existing outside this barrier of birth are not encouraged to come in. Unhappily for the German Army, the German officer had every inducement to become a snob. Too often, with all his industry and keenness, he proved an insufferable snob. Exceptions existed of course, as they always exist, but they merely proved the rule.

Increasingly in Germany of recent years these effects of privilege and caste received open encouragement. Nothing could more surely and

steadily undermine real military power. The influences guiding the system were no longer in any true sense progressive. The system revolved in a vicious circle of self-admiration. Such an incident as that at Zabern proved that it had ceased to be healthy. Privilege, unless severely checked, will eat the heart out of any profession. If, instead of being checked, the assertion of privilege be encouraged, the corrosion becomes irresistible. For the disasters of the present war the preparations were, though unconscious, as long and careful as the preparations of the spy system for imagined victory.

CHAPTER X

THE REGIMENT UP TO DATE

IN the British Army every regiment has a well-marked history and a proud record. The London regiment, better known as the Royal Fusiliers, for example, saved the day at Albuera, and after sweeping away, in one of the most famous infantry charges on record, the French veterans advancing in the full flush of apparently assured triumph, formed, to quote the words of Napier, the main body of the 1800 unwounded and unconquerable British soldiers who, out of the original 6000, stood at the end of the battle "on that dreadful hill."

The record of every British regiment forms a story of kindred deeds of valour. Most bear affectionate nicknames earned by episodes of signal bravery. The Munster Fusiliers, who during the retreat from Mons showed themselves a band of heroes, are as happy to be dubbed "the Dirty Shirts" and the Dublin

regiment to be known as "the Dublin Toughs," as the Northumberlanders are to be famous as "the Fighting Fifth," or the 17th Lancers as the "Death or Glory Boys."

In a professional army like the British the fame of the corps is not only one of the recruiting sergeant's best assets, but has a moral effect hardly to be estimated, and contributes to that close comradeship which among the armies of Europe has made the British distinctive. The men of a British regiment are brothers in arms with a common good name to keep up and to fortify. Next to the British Army the spirit of comradeship is most cherished among the French.

It is for this reason that, though on the modern system of training the battalion has become to all intents the British infantry unit, regimental traditions are kept up. This is a wise precaution. An army is not a mere mechanism which can be dealt with independently of its history. It has a soul as well as a body.

Few questions have in consequence been more keenly debated than that of "scrapping" the regimental system in favour of the battalion. There are even, as already pointed out, some reformers who would reduce the infantry

unit to the company—who would, that is to say, cut the battalion into four quarters.

Our British military authorities have solved this problem in what is evidently the only way it can be solved—by a workable compromise. They have kept the names and with the names the priceless fame of British regiments, and have adhered to the battalion unit.

One reason for this is that British battalions are mostly smaller than those on the Continent. The battalion forms in the British Army a manageable body.

In the German Army, commanders of battalions are entrusted with less responsibility than in the British. There is a greater distinction too between the crack regiments and the rest. Every British regiment would be a crack corps on the German standard. As compared with themselves, the Prussian Guards, and even the Jaegers, do not consider the ordinary infantry of the German Army on the same military earth. No such feeling exists between British regiments.

These crack German corps have their traditions, but the mass of German regiments are little more than military mills whose business is to yield a given output. As the mass to be dealt

with is so large the merely administrative question makes it necessary that the battalions should be handled in regimental groups. It is considered a valuable feature. Prince Kraft, speaking of the proposals for reform, says :

“I need not begin by impressing on you the important part which the officer commanding a regiment of infantry plays. If we consider the amount of his duty we shall realise what a gap would exist if he ceased to be. He has to supervise the whole of the training of the troops in detail, and is responsible for it. He looks after the supply of officers, and sees to their training for duty, their education, and their moral character. He controls and supervises the supply of N.C. officers to all the twelve companies, not one of which can accept a one-year volunteer unless the Colonel has first seen him, and has approved of him. He directs the selection of the tactical principles which are to be observed during the exercises, and is responsible for it. Moreover, he has entire direction of the pay and clothing, and has charge of everything connected with barracks and quarters and with the subsistence of the men, while finally he has the heavy and important duty of attending to punishments and minor jurisdiction.

This is also the case in the other arms, but the number of men is far larger in an infantry regiment, and thus the amount of work of this kind which has to be done there is much greater. There is a vast difference in looking after each individual man among 700 and among 1800 or 1900. Thus the demands on the energy and zeal of a Colonel are often so great, that we may be inclined to doubt whether the strength of any individual can suffice to meet them.

“It is certainly true that the officer commanding a regiment has in his command itself the means to lighten his work ; he has an adjutant and clerks, and can in addition employ other officers. But any one who thinks that he has therefore no need to write himself has never commanded a regiment. Everything which has reference to the reports on officers and on candidates for that rank, always most troublesome and disagreeable affairs, which must be invariably treated with the greatest tact, and which must remain buried in the breast of the officer commanding a regiment (since no one else must ever know anything about them), he is obliged to write with his own hand. Did you not tell me that during the time that you

commanded a regiment you selected 60 candidates for officers and rejected 240 ? I know well what an enormous amount of correspondence may take place about even a single one of such candidates.

“ Moreover, the officer commanding a regiment, in addition to his principal duty of working his command on correct tactical principles and of looking after the military, technical, and moral training of his regiment, should also be a lawyer, in order that he may in every case rightly administer military law, and should further be a master of accounts, so that he may always be able to exercise control over the Paymaster, and may not find himself suddenly placed in the most awkward of all predicaments owing to a deficit in his treasure-chest ; while he must in addition know something about tailoring and shoemaking, in order that he may be able to properly look after the clothing of his men from head to foot. And of all these that of which he knows least will give him the greatest trouble during his period of service.

“ How, then, can he keep up the freshness of thought which he requires in order to think out interesting and instructive exercises for his

officers, to be well prepared and confident as to his tactics for the manœuvres, and to carry them through with the necessary energy, and also to perform his social duties to his officers and their families, to show himself always pleasant and agreeable to them, to share their pleasures and to direct their conduct ?

“ When I had the honour to command a regiment of artillery it consisted, according to the then organisation, of 15 batteries, and contained about as many men as an infantry regiment does now, and perhaps a few more officers. The amount of the daily important and pressing business was so great, that every evening my head felt like a totally exhausted well, which yields only mud in place of water. I can therefore quite understand why it is that so few officers commanding regiments progress with the times, even in military matters only, especially if they are married, and desire, though they be free from any home cares, to devote at least a few hours of the day to their families, in order to ensure that they may attain a proper position in the world. Only a few exceptionally gifted natures are capable of keeping themselves up to the mark by reading the most important works on military science, and of advancing

their own knowledge so as to remain in touch with the progress of the Art of War. If the commander of a regiment desires conscientiously to discharge the duties of his command, there can be no question for him of any advance in general knowledge, or of any enjoyment of the fine arts.

“I have often thought, with regard to this subject, whether it would not be better if the extent of the work of the commander of a regiment were to be diminished by handing over his functions altogether to the commanders of battalions, and by giving up entirely the status of a commander of a regiment, or, to put it in other words, if the commander of a battalion were given the position of the commander of a regiment, an acting field officer being added to the establishment.

“But the more I have thought over the suggestion of such an organisation and its consequences, the more am I convinced that it would have more drawbacks than advantages. The then commander of a regiment, who would have only four companies under his command, would not be so overworked as is the present. That is true. But this would be the only advantage. Everything else tells against the

plan. The body of officers would be too small to have any variety in it. We should seldom find in it all the various capacities for the discharge of duties, from which we must select for the several functions required. The bond of comradeship, which is the foundation of good feeling, might be too easily dissolved by the differences between individual personalities, and the versatility, which now by means of earnest discourse and cheerful companionship at scientific or social meetings increases the unity of the young officers and makes their lives pleasant, would then be lost; a general apathy would arise, and the young officer would soon grow accustomed to spend his spare evenings as a matter of course in beer-houses, if indeed he did not fall into bad company or take to gambling. You will not, I hope, oppose to this statement the fact that the Jäger and Pioneer battalions have a single independent body of officers. I am convinced that the officers of these corps feel most painfully that the small number of comrades in their regiment is a misfortune.

“However, important as this point is, it cannot be the main consideration which should decide the selection of a military organisation.

The main point is, and will always be, the combat, the battle, to which the body of troops owes its existence. If we look at the plans of battles which are added to the official account, we shall be able to form a general idea of the consequences of the activity and zone of influence of this rank, since on them, the positions of single companies are marked, so far at least as could be done after comparing the various reports. We shall see there that, as soon as the troops became engaged, the companies and even the different battalions became mixed, but that as a rule the regiments preserved their unity ; this is a proof that the troops fought by regiments, and that thus the regimental command played a necessary and important part in battle.

“As a rule a regiment of three battalions fights better than three battalions of different regiments who happen to be formed together and intermixed. Men are but men, and in many of them the instinct of self-preservation is strong. Such men will be ashamed to “funk” if they are fighting among men whom they know ; but if they happen to be among soldiers wearing a different uniform, and whom they do not know, the desire to keep out of danger

grows stronger in them. If we wish to gain an insight into the truth of things, we must take men as they are, and not as they are made to appear by a poetical imagination. It is true that there are heroes, and they exist in all classes of society. We may even say, to the honour of the human race, that they are not altogether rare. I have seen many of them. But the great mass of men are not heroic, and they have to be led up to deeds of heroism and directed in danger.

“But you must excuse me if I do not offer you any proof of my statement that an entire regiment of three battalions fights better than three single battalions of different regiments. I cannot give you any examples, for to do so would be to put my foot into a wasp’s nest.

“From what I have said I have come to the conclusion that we should be glad that our regiments consist of three battalions, and that we should be wrong to copy the organisation of those armies in which the regiment is identical with the battalion. The disadvantage that the mental and bodily strength of perhaps half of the commanders of regiments is so absorbed by their duty that they are ruined by it and become unfit for further service, must be made the best

of. These officers have in peace sacrificed themselves wholly for their King and Fatherland, just as they would have been ready to give their lives in war. They must strike the years during which they have commanded their regiments out of their life, since they could then live only in and for the regiment. Their highest reward lies in the consciousness that they have been one with their regiment; and the tears which a commander sheds when he leaves his regiment afford the very strongest possible proof how dear this time has been to him, in spite of all his labour, his unremitting care, and all the wear and tear of his nerves. As for those young officers who grumble about the touchiness, or even about the real bad temper, and the impatience and snappish manner of their colonel, I should like to relate to them all the pin-pricks and annoyances which their commander has daily and hourly to endure, and I should further like to advise them not to judge their colonel and to deal very charitably with him, for a time will come when they will themselves know what it is to be the commander of a large regiment.

“With respect to the exercises and movements of a regiment, they are founded on the

experience of many years, have been well thought out, and apply not only to a brigade but also to any body of infantry which consists of more than one battalion. I have also in general found that these principles have been thoroughly understood and practically worked out. The various formations and movements which a regiment can thus use are so extremely numerous, that it is always very difficult to go once through them all in the short time (eight working days) which is allowed for the exercise of the entire regiment; any idea of working them up to perfection must therefore be abandoned. If the officer commanding a regiment insists upon the execution of a movement, and repeats it several times when it is not correctly carried out, he runs a great risk of finding his time fail him, and of having to leave some portion of his immense programme altogether untouched; for the movements of infantry are slow and take up a great deal of time. For this reason it would be very advantageous if the time allowed for the exercises of the regiment could be increased. But this is not possible unless the other periods, which are quite as important, be diminished.

“ All that the officer commanding a regiment

can do is to take care that the elementary movements are properly carried out during the battalion exercises, so that he need give the least possible attention to them. This applies especially to the march past, which he should certainly see carried out in all the different formations at least once during the course of the drill season, but of which he should carefully avoid the too frequent repetition. If he immediately repeats a march past, because it has not been perfect, he may be quite certain that it will be even worse the next time. He must be satisfied with mentioning the mistakes made, and with perhaps repeating it on another day. For if he repeats it at once, the attention of that person alone who made the mistake will be on the alert ; while the others will grow weary with the repetition, and will, being weary, be more likely to make errors. This is also true of all other movements. The movements of a mass of infantry of the size of a regiment are, moreover, so lengthy and wearisome, that any repetition must be tiring if it takes place on the same day. And nothing so entirely does away with all the use of the exercises as a feeling of weariness among the officers and men.

“Again, the officer commanding a regiment should make only such movements (parade drills excepted) as would be really of use in action. It will not always be necessary to carry out the actual combat. Movements of the reserve, or of the second or third lines, are also battle movements. He must think out some tactical situation to suit each movement and each evolution, and every soldier of his regiment must be able to appreciate and understand this tactical situation. If this be not done the exercises will be objectless. They cannot be made instructive if they are carried out merely for the sake of carrying them out.

“I have known officers commanding infantry regiments who, fully recognising this fact, did nothing but manœuvre their regiments during the regimental exercises. These officers went too far in the other direction ; for an infantry regiment cannot manœuvre independently without any combination with the other arms. It is sufficient if, in the limited time which is allowed for the exercises, the officer commanding works once through each of the simple formations for battle which are given in the regulations. In order to get through even this limited amount in the drill season, he must have his plan made

beforehand for every day, if he wishes to be able to work at least once through each problem.

“There have been cases (but, thank God, they are rare) where an officer commanding a regiment, with the object of ‘doing well’ at the inspection, has practised the same movements day after day, and has finally on the day of inspection produced his theatrical entertainment, which, however, has sometimes turned out worse than any improvised exercises. You will, I am sure, agree with me, that such a proceeding is merely a waste of time of the worst description, and is an ample proof that such a commander is not fit for his position.

“The larger the mass of troops which is being exercised, the more distinctly is the representation of the combat seen to be unreal, since we then have to suppose so many things, especially the enemy, and thus so much has to be left to the imagination. If in this case the fancy of the commander is not in complete harmony with that of his subordinates, the most utter confusion will arise, together with faults which can teach nothing to any one as regards real work, for the reason that such faults could not be committed in war where a visible enemy

stands before us. But it is exactly these faults which take up the greatest amount of time."

Now it is manifest from this statement that the average colonel in the German Army has too much to do to be able to do it well. If "only a few exceptionally gifted natures" can cope with such duties, and keep abreast of the advancement of military science, plainly most must fall behind. But a colonel whose military knowledge has become out of date is a positive danger, as well as a stumbling-block to the officers under him.

The fact is that, with the modern system of training, three battalions are more than any one man can be responsible for on such lines. Either he has to scamp the work or to risk professional inefficiency. A system which confronts responsible men with such an alternative cannot be sound.

The argument that men would "funk" if not fighting among such a number as 3000 is, so far at all events as British troops are concerned, obviously inapplicable. The honour of the corps is as much the British soldier's concern fighting with his battalion or even with his company as with all the battalions side by side.

In no sense is the sketch given by Prince

Kraft of the duties of a commanding officer over-coloured. Those duties are onerous. Not only are they onerous, but the opportunity of the commanding officer to fulfil them thoroughly, for the efficiency of an army, and most of all for the efficiency of a modern army, vital. Let it not be forgotten that it is to him the regimental officers look for inspiration and guidance. He has been through the mill, and his ripper judgment are the assets of his juniors. To overload a commanding officer cannot but prejudice the work of his juniors. Through them that prejudicial effect passes to the non-coms. and to the men.

An overworked commanding officer will tend under the strain to degenerate into a martinet. If then in the British Army the lieutenant-colonel who commands a battalion, or the major who commands a battery of artillery, has as much as he can reasonably manage, and he undoubtedly has, what is to be expected of a German colonel of infantry with three battalions, or of a German colonel of artillery with seven batteries on his hands? Is it possible for him to do the work with the thoroughness put into it by a British commanding officer? It is not possible.

Germany, for political reasons, considered it necessary to have a huge army, but with the resources available it was not less necessary to train and maintain the army, as far as possible, cheaply.

In whatever direction, however, money may be saved there can be none in which saving is so truly waste as starving an army in brain power. Better to have cut the *so-called* strength of the army down. In the present war Germany has thrown up no commanders of real distinction. Is that surprising in face of the facts? Quite apart even from the influences of caste and privilege the system made the evolution of distinguished generals as nearly as it could be an impossibility. More especially is that true of more recent years. For in recent years the duties of commanding officers, already too heavy, became heavier, and the increase in the *bulk* of the army was, in truth, a decrease in its *fighting power*. It is not too much to say that with one million thoroughly trained, ably officered, active troops and first reserves, Germany would have done far better than with her four millions.

From what has been outlined up to this point it will be gathered that the defects dis-

closed by the German military system, as a system, are grave.

It has proved deficient, owing to the practical difficulty of dealing with large masses of mixed quality, in not realising that individual training necessary for the modern soldier who has to handle and to fight against modern arms.

It has not, owing to the same practical difficulty and to the attendant cost, been able to train all its *units* on modern lines.

Presenting the inherent fault of a distinction between its professional element—the officers—and its non-professional element—the rank and file—the system has emphasised that distinction instead of minimising it.

Inherent, too, in the system, owing to this composite character and to the labour of mass training, has been the tendency towards formality in regulations, and to the pomp of militarism rather than to the real business of war.

Owing to the distinction drawn between them and the rank and file, the officers have been overworked, and their character as a profession has been lowered by abuse of privilege.

In the higher ranks of its officers the army has been under-supplied, and the cultivation of great professional ability incidentally cramped.

Practice has not kept pace with theory, and in some important respects received theory has not been sound.

Reform has been difficult owing to the influence and effect of out-of-date usages and traditions.

To expect the German military system to stand the strain put upon it by the present war was clearly expecting the unreasonable.

In contrast the modern British system—

Is homogenous in principle.

Realises individual training of its men.

Provides for the practical training of all its units.

Has no distinction between officers and men, save in rank duties and professional knowledge.

Is planned with a view to the real business of war.

Is free from the influence of privilege.

Is adequately staffed in its higher ranks and encourages professional ability.

Is informed with a practical and progressive spirit.

CHAPTER XI

THE MODERN ARMY IN WAR

So far we have considered the British and the German military systems as organisations for turning out soldiers. It remains to look at them as organisations for carrying on the operations of modern war.

The leading principles of military science are of course common ground. There is not a German, French or British military science, but there is a German, French or British method or art of putting the principles of the science into practice, and these methods are distinctive.

This art or application of the science of war is divided into strategy and tactics. Strategy is concerned with the lines on which a campaign is planned. The object of strategy broadly is always to fight at an advantage, under conditions, that is to say, which will either ensure victory or in any event reduce to a minimum the effects of defeat. A consistent aim of strategy is to throw a superior force in the directions

where operations must be most decisive ; to do it before your opponent can effectively anticipate or check the move ; to seize and if possible keep the power of compelling him to conform his movements to yours ; to keep open the avenues of supply on which your army depends ; to close those of your opponent if you can ; and in any case to provide for a safe line of retirement, so that in the event of reverses there need be no necessity of surrender. It is evident that if a plan of campaign assures these conditions that plan must in all human probability succeed.

At the outset of a campaign one of the two sides must be the attacking and the other the defending side. As to which can open the attack depends on rapidity and completeness of preparation. If one side is assured that its preparations can be completed more rapidly, or if its preparations have already been secretly made, its campaign will be planned for the offensive. There is a manifest advantage in a campaign of attack. For one thing, the attacking side begins with the power of compelling the other side to conform, at all events in part, to the attacker's movements ; or to put it in military phrascology, the attacker has the

“initiative.” If he can keep the initiative the chances are that he will win. That, summarily put, is what occurred in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.

Where it is necessary to adopt a plan of defence the defending side tries, by anticipating the probable movements of the attack, so to dispose its forces that at the earliest moment the initiative may be snatched from the attack and pass to the defence. If that be done, and if the defence can keep the initiative, the attack is itself turned by a counter-attack into a defence. As an attack the original onset must then be said to have failed, and the issue depends on how far and for how long the original attacker can maintain the defence forced upon him. That summarily is what has occurred to date in the western theatre during the present war.

But besides strategy or the art of planning and conducting campaigns there is the body of deductions from reasoning and experience called tactics, or the art of winning battles. A sound strategist may be a bad tactician; and conversely a sound tactician may be a bad strategist. In the first case he will probably suffer defeat where he ought to have gained victory, but he will probably be able, as a strategist, to wriggle

out of the worst consequences of defeat. In the second case he may gain victories despite his strategical blunders, but in all likelihood will derive no advantage from them.

The combination of genius in strategy and consummate skill in tactics is extremely rare, for great soldiers are no more common than great poets, and it is safe to say that the side which discovers the great soldier holds, other things being not too unequal, all the odds.

Austrian generals, for example, have frequently shown themselves admirable strategists, but the tactics of the Austrians have almost always been poor. The Prussians, on the other hand, have made skill in tactics their great aim ; but with the one exception of the elder von Moltke they have never thrown up a great strategist. On the whole they have rather looked down upon strategy as something of a subtlety and refinement. They paid dearly for this mistake in the campaign of Jena. Napoleon compelled them by strategy to fight in a situation where defeat must be followed by surrender, and in the battle itself he met their tactics by tactics still more skilful.

In modern war with its rapid means of communication it is the usual plan for the strategy

of a campaign to be worked out and directed by the chief of the General Staff, from some central point where rapid and reliable information can be gathered. The tactics must of course be left to the generals in the field. Obviously there is an enormous advantage when the responsible strategist is also a master of tactics and has had experience in the actual operations of war. His strategy will then take into account a variety of essential facts and details likely to be overlooked by a theorist, however able, and in consequence will be far more sound. The elder von Moltke was such a man. So too is General Joffre.

This brief outline will, it is hoped, make clear the points which follow. Obviously when a soldier is trained he is trained for a purpose ; so also is a unit. When the units are linked up into the organic masses of modern armies, horse, foot, and artillery and the rest, their power would be no more than potential if it could not be applied, or, if badly applied, it would be wasted.

A very essential aspect therefore of the making of a modern army is the scheme of tactics designed to apply its strength, because ideas on tactics affect training from start to finish ; and

in fact it is largely from distinctive ideas on tactics, or from the importance respectively attached to different features of tactics, that the differences technically arise between one military system and another.

In this connection it seems advisable to take in the first place the German system, and having considered the leading principles of tactics on which it has been built to contrast them with the ideas adopted by the British.

The notion that the leading principles of German tactics are in any sense new is quite unfounded. They were evolved by Frederick the Great, and in every essential respect they are now what they were then. One of the best synopses of Frederick's system is that given by the late General Hamley in his well-known work "The Operations of War Explained and Illustrated." Frederick, as General Hamley says,

"found himself at war with the three greatest military powers of Europe (France, Austria, and Russia), and he had to solve the hard problem of making head at once against all with forces inferior to any one of them. He perceived that the secret of success must lie in turning to full and unexpected account that power of manœuvring which his father's system [his father had

been called 'the drill sergeant of Europe'] had imparted to the Prussian troops, a system perfected under his (Frederick's) own direction in camps of instruction before the Seven Years' War. Urged by his impetuous spirit always to attack, he found in the Austrians an enemy always willing to await him. They carried the system of selecting and occupying strong positions to its very extreme. [They were careful strategists.] To its extreme, too, they carried the pedantry of war, embodied in their blind addiction to arbitrary rules and ancient precedents. [Bad tactics.] Such a foe was to a dexterous tactician and a highly trained army a very whetstone of skill. Moving round their slow, inert masses like a panther round an ox, he found the unguarded part, and cast himself upon it with all his force. The secret of his success lay not so much in judicious movements in the theatre of war as in the use he made of the flexibility of his army as compared with the armies of his adversaries. It was by his success on the fields of battle rather than by his plans of campaign, which were often faulty, that he finally emerged victorious with a military renown unrivalled in his generation.

"Granting that the superior steadiness and

fighting qualities of his troops rendered them, line for line, on equal terms, more than a match for their enemy; and granting also that the manœuvring power of his army enabled it to form line for battle with unexampled rapidity, to deceive the enemy by feints, to fall upon them before they could retrieve a false movement, or to retreat safely after a foiled attack; still his most decisive successes were due to this fact more than to any other, that he frequently succeeded *in placing his line within striking distance obliquely across the extremity of his adversary's line*. For troops thus attacked and outflanked are exposed hopelessly to ruin should they remain passive, while the formation of a new line facing the enemy is a work not only of time but of great difficulty when attempted under the stress of a vigorous and sustained attack. The object of all attempts to outflank an enemy is to obtain an advantage of this kind, and the necessity of guarding against such enterprises forms a principal motive in tactics."

Now if that summary, which is both accurate and clear, be attentively considered, it will be found the key to everything distinctive alike in German military training and in German

tactics, for a worship of the system of Frederick joined to a bias towards theory for the sake of theory has undoubtedly of recent years produced in the German Army that very pedantry of war they were accustomed formerly to ridicule in the Austrians, joined to the like blind confidence in their own perfection which has made the history of Austria a tale of defeats.

For instance, the flexibility and power of manœuvring which marked the troops of Frederick the Great hardened into a desire for smartness, which, carried to an impracticable extreme, had the effect of destroying flexibility, and German commanding officers frequently handled their men in a way which showed they had no real idea of modern warlike operations. On this Prince Kraft observes :

“ There are an endless number of drill-ground habits, not to mention little aids and dodges, all absolutely impracticable in war, which assist in making the drills correct and smart. Every soldier knows them.

“ At the commencement of the field exercises the officer commanding the battalion will certainly be found, mounted, near that one of the skirmishers who fires the first shot, and who himself must find cover by lying down. He

remains in the skirmishing line during the whole fight, and if perhaps he realises that he really could not fail to be killed there, he retires at the farthest to some point between the skirmishers and the nearest support. From this place he gives words of command and directs signals to be made. But if any movement, a flank attack, or a reinforcement, is to be carried out, he is certain to ride up himself and give orders for everything. Above all he will be sure to do this if a mistake has once happened, if an order has not been correctly delivered, or the wrong description of fire has been used, or if anything is done contrary to his wish. He ought to be declared killed hundreds of times in the space of an hour. He goes to every point, except just to the very one where he ought to be during the whole duration of the action (if it were a real one), that is to say, to that company which he has told off as his last reserve, and which alone he should accompany into the foremost fighting line, unless he wishes prematurely to hand over the command of the battalion ; this company he never goes near.

“ Proceedings like these, arising from life on the drill ground and totally false to nature, raise very dangerous illusions in the minds of

all those who have no experience of war. For they think that things really happen like this in war, and easily lose their heads when they find that in real work time and space do not fit in with the ideas which they have formed from their experience on the drill ground. And there is more even than this. The men who have been accustomed to see the Lieutenant-Colonel well to the front, begin to make remarks if, as soon as the bullets whistle, he remains in rear with the reserve company; the consequence of this is that, at any rate in the first action in which he takes part, the field officer must certainly ride where he has been in the habit of riding, in order to avoid giving occasion for such remarks.

“Even in the middle of the present century we gave up the old fashion of using in the battalion exercises merely elementary tactical movements in rigid formations, and of limiting them to wheels, the manual exercise, column formations, facings, deployments, movements to the front and oblique movements, of doing very little skirmishing, and that by whole battalions, and finally of making the march-past the great criterion of excellence. Battalion commanders who were being inspected, were

permitted at the close of the exercises to make movements, such as would be used in battle, which they had themselves thought out, and which were not included in the regulations. This made the field officers pay attention to such matters, and they often brought forward new and good ideas. Any one who suggested something of this kind, even if it was not accepted as altogether practical, gained at least the credit of being a man of original mind. This very soon got beyond reasonable limits. Every one wanted to invent something, and tried to keep his discovery secret up to the time of the inspection of his battalion, while after it he brooded during the whole year over how at the next he might show something yet more marvellous. The most extraordinary fancies sometimes appeared, of which one of the least wonderful was the celebrated river which was marked out by men posted across the drill ground, this being perhaps on the top of a hill. These movements, on account of the disorder which they always produced, were soon known by the name of 'Turkish Manœuvres,' or for short as 'Turks.' The fact that each battalion commander was permitted to carry out his 'Turk' under the eyes of the inspector tended

very much to destroy the authority of the regulations, since every one believed that, when he should come into a real action, he would be allowed, and even that he ought, to throw over at once all the directions given in the regulations. . . .

“After a few years then efforts were made in high places to repress the increasing tendency to wander from the regulations and invent new fancies, and it was strictly laid down that when ‘Turks’ were carried out, such movements only were to be made as were to be found in the regulations.

“The use of company columns in combination with fighting in extended order was from time to time developed by supplementary orders.

“After our experiences in war, especially those of 1870–71, it was permitted, for a certain time, to bring forward various propositions practically on the drill ground. These principally endeavoured to find a solution for the problem, how to advance to the attack over open ground which was under the fire of the enemy. The most marvellous formations again appeared. Sometimes the whole drill ground, for a length and breadth of 300 paces, might be seen

dotted with files each of two men, and it was impossible to help the feeling creeping over one, that in this case a general 'skedaddle' was being elevated into a system. You might see battalions doubling until they lost their breath, and even until they tumbled down, and then begin to fire in such a state of excitement that there was very good reason to doubt whether even a single shot could possibly hit its mark. You might even see thick swarms of skirmishers firing as they ran, holding their rifles horizontally at the hip. An enormous mass of literature full of suggestions turned the heads of such officers as thought about the matter, until at length they had no longer any idea as to what they had read in these pamphlets and what was laid down in the regulations.

"The battalion exercises are divided into two parts, namely, the elementary movements laid down in the regulations and the combat. The regulations give all necessary directions for both. Those concerning the combat are so elastic, that they adapt themselves to all circumstances, and are not only entirely sufficient, but could also scarcely be better thought out, with the object of affording the necessary guidance, while at the same time they leave

free scope to the individuality of each leader, and fully develop that independence of the junior officers which is so needful when fighting in extended order.

“And yet we find frequently, and even generally, that it is especially these most important paragraphs of the regulations which are not observed during the exercise of a battalion. On the contrary, as the lapse of years tends to separate us from our last experience of war, the exercise of a battalion becomes every day more rigid, more of a sealed pattern, and more based on systematic routine, except indeed where the influence of the inspecting officers strives against such rigidity, insisting that the letter shall be subservient to the spirit, and be ruled by it. But this is very difficult, for this rigidity and routine are not products of indolence, but are due entirely to the exaggerated zeal of the officers commanding battalions.

“In consequence of this, the style and the manner in which the officer commanding works his battalion tends daily, more and more, to differ from anything which he could by any possibility carry out in action.”

Not only the commanders of battalions, but

the captains of companies took occasion to exhibit their impossible theoretical accomplishments :

“ I cannot think it right that scientific tactical evolutions should be carried out at company drill. But we do see, and not rarely, fancy movements, which are quite unlike anything which could possibly happen in actual battle. For instance, you may see an exercise carried out which consists in sending one section against the front of the enemy, while the second attacks him on one, and the third on the other flank, until at last he is hemmed in, on the exact pattern of the battle of Sedan ; but in practice we shall never find an enemy at once so indolent and so complaisant. False ideas are thus excited, springing directly from impossible representations of fighting during peace. As a man works his company during peace so will he try to work it, at any rate the first time, in war.”

In these matters there is in the British Army a practical good sense which makes corresponding exhibitions impossible. Let it not be supposed that theory has been neglected, or subordinated to any rule-of-thumb. In nothing has the organisation of the British Army been

of late years more marked than in its schools of gunnery, schools of engineering, schools of musketry, schools of cavalry, schools for the training of gymnastic instructors, and not least in the school of aviation. All these institutions, distinctively the feature of the *modern* army, are recognitions of the value of theory. But the aim in view, success in the operations of war, is never lost sight of. The result is that when a British force is taken on to the field of operations it is really ready for work.

In the old days the fault of the British Army was the exact opposite of the German. The formations were never there as wanted; there was altogether too much rule-of-thumb; and leaving a force to "worry through." All that is changed, but fortunately it has not been changed into the "pedantry of war." With troops like the British no officer would think of fagging his men by carrying out fantastic fancies.

CHAPTER XII

TURNING MOVEMENTS : HOW THEY ARE MADE AND MET

IN one thing, however, the Germans have, in spite of the penchant towards pedantry, been perfectly right. They were perhaps the first to recognise that with modern arms superiority in tactics has become still more decisive.

Believing in the superiority of their tactics, they aimed at enhancing the decisive effect of that superiority by improvement in their arms, and more especially by increasing their power and preponderance in guns.

In the war against France in 1870 each division of German troops had attached to it a brigade formed of twelve batteries of field artillery. In addition there was the reserve or army corps artillery, including howitzer batteries, a total in all of 160 guns.

Now the older rule had been that 2·5 guns for every 1000 men was the most that could be needed, and that a heavier train of artillery

would encumber movement without materially aiding operations. This for an army corps of 40,000 men gave a total of 100 guns.

The point to be remembered in this connection is that it is not the greater number of guns an army possesses that matters so much as the bringing of the guns fully into effective action as early as possible. That means widely modifying the dispositions for battle, for bringing the guns fully into early action is in practice often a serious problem. Frequently it is the problem which dictates choice of the battle ground where choice is open.

Undoubtedly the Germans proved by their dispositions in the war of 1870 that that older rule had become obsolete. Their superior strength in artillery was admittedly one of the main factors contributing to the result of that campaign. Though it was not, as sometimes supposed, *the* main factor.

This greater weight of artillery came upon the French as a surprise, and it unquestionably added to the effect of German tactics.

The reason why, therefore, the Germans came to rely so much upon artillery was the conviction that they more than any other military men had studied and mastered the

turning movement in all its phases and variations.

There is, however, a limitation both to the power of artillery and to the tactic of the turning movement. As the best German authorities themselves admit, guns alone cannot prevail against a better infantry, for a better infantry sooner or later will capture them, and if well entrenched *good* infantry cannot be shelled out of their positions by artillery. Again, the turning movement is a tactic only likely to be attended by success if practised against *inferior troops commanded by inferior generals*. Against equal, and much more against better troops commanded by equal or by better generals, all the chances are that it may end in disaster.

For an outflanking movement must be made beyond the range of the enemy's artillery, and if possible, as a surprise. Its effect, if successful, is to enfilade the attacked flank with an overwhelming fire. If, however, on being apprised of such an attack, an equal or superior general in command of equal or superior troops strikes up with the wing of his army opposite to the wing attacked, and at the same time moves his reserves, held for the purpose, so as

to *outflank the outflanking force*, he will hoist his opponent with that opponent's own petard, for his attacking wing will enfilade the positions *they* assault, and his reserves will similarly enfilade and destroy the original outflankers. Manifestly a general commanding better troops could undertake these operations with complete confidence.

The outflanking movement therefore, adopted as a settled principle of tactics, rests on a confidence of your own superiority. In the instance of Frederick the Great that confidence was justified. In the instance of the German Army of to-day it has been shown to be illusory.

At the same time, from the fact that smokeless powder has not only made the rapidity of artillery fire nearly ten times as great as when gunners had to wait until the smoke of each shot cleared away, but has correspondingly increased the difficulty of locating hostile guns, the effect of outflanking where it can be accomplished is far more marked. In the words of Prince Kraft :

“ Pressure on a flank has now tenfold power. I have repeatedly seen this in war, not only on a large scale, as when at Königgrätz we of the II army fell upon the flank of the Austrian line of

battle, but also in the case of small bodies. For example, in the battle of St. Privat we were for hours engaged in a delaying action of artillery in front of the enemy's position, which crowned the heights between St. Privat and Amanvillers. The enemy had pushed forward some battalions extended as skirmishers down the slope to their front ; the fire of these troops caused so much loss to my batteries, that the general commanding the corps sent me successively six companies as an escort ; these were for the most part distributed by sections in the intervals between the batteries, in order to prevent the enemy's swarms from rushing in against our front, as our skirmishers had done at Königgrätz in the attack on the Austrian artillery line between Chlum and Nedelitz. But the French skirmishers remained at a distance of from 900 to 1000 paces, and continued to inflict loss upon us, while our needle-gun could not hit their scattered individuals. The brave infantry soldiers of the Augusta regiment wished over and over again to rush forward, in order to free us from our troublesome *vis-à-vis*. But since I had been ordered to carry on a delaying fight for a time, and since the infantry who could advance were fewer in number than the enemy,

and would have masked the batteries by their advance, so that the latter would have had to cease firing, I several times stopped this premature valour. Major von R. then suggested to me that a company might be pushed forward by a hollow in the ground upon the enemy's left flank. Since this movement did not mask my fire, I permitted it to be carried out. Hardly had this company (Captain von A.'s) opened fire from the prolongation of the enemy's line of skirmishers than the whole line rose and retired up the slope. Now at last we were able to see how large were the numbers of the hostile infantry who, hidden in the furrows of the ground, had laid wait for us in such threatening propinquity. We reckoned them as being in all nine battalions, which lay in three lines one behind the other. Our shells wrought great destruction among these masses, as they fled up the slope. Since, by great good luck, the general advance on St. Privat took place immediately after this episode, my batteries now found the ground open in front of them, were able to advance at a rapid pace, and to reach the heights to the right of St. Privat. Thus the sudden flank fire of one single company had made nine of the enemy's battalions fall back.

The effect of such a flank fire is magical, especially owing to the idea which seizes the enemy when they are surprised by it, that they are in serious danger.

“ But this effect can be produced only when either the direction of the advance leads directly against the enemy’s flank, or when folds of the ground to which the foe has paid no attention give an opportunity for it.”

We need not, however, now go back for examples to the campaign of 1870. The overwhelming reverse suffered by the Bavarian Army during the present war at Luneville is illustration enough. While engaged against the French this army, attacked on the right flank by a second French force advancing north from Toul, was forced into a disastrous retreat partly through the defiles of the Vosges, partly upon Metz, and lost a heavy proportion of the total force in killed and wounded.

It is hardly surprising that with the examples of the war of 1870 held up to them, and with their tendency to ride an idea to death, German military men made the outflanking movement a hobby which, like Aaron’s rod, tended to swallow up most other movements. Our critic referring to this observed :

“ The fighting exercises, when left altogether to the battalion commander, frequently extend into scientific tactics and are even complicated with strategy, so that, owing to the slow pace at which infantry can move, they use up the time and the strength of the men to an excessive extent. This applies especially to the inclination, which is good enough in principle, to make use of the effect of flank movements. For the battalion commander will not allow the company which has been told off to attack the enemy in flank to make an entirely impossible flank movement within the reach of the enemy's annihilating fire, and must therefore detach it outside of this zone, that is to say, he must, when the drill ground is large enough, commence his attack at a distance of 2200 yards. The effect of this is that the turning force has to get over a yet greater distance, while the advance by rushes and the fire-fight, which must last some little time, will cause this single movement to take up at least half an hour.

“ Moreover the flank attack hardly ever succeeds. Either it takes place too late after the main attack has been pressed home, or else it takes place too soon ; or again one of the two, either the main or the flank attack, delays the

other so long under a decisive fire from the enemy that its defeat is certain. . . . How far the imagination may wander, if we forget that saying of Clausewitz : ‘ In war everything is simple, but what is simple is difficult.’

“ Every one knows, and it is strongly brought forward in the regulations, that the defender, since the recent improvements in firearms, can offer an unconquerable resistance against an attack which is directed against his front alone, if only he has sufficient ammunition and his men aim quietly ; so long at least as he is not crushed by heavy loss in the front line. But if it be possible to succeed in taking the enemy in flank, then the victory is as good as won. The only question then is, How to take the enemy in flank ?

“ There are but two ways : surprise, or a preponderance of force. A surprise can be carried out, either by assigning different lines of advance to the troops which are directed against the front and the flank of the defenders (this I should feel inclined to call the strategic kind of flank attack), or by skilfully making use of folds of the ground or other cover, so as to throw a portion of one’s force upon the flank of the foe. But these two kinds of movement against a

flank are almost impossible on the drill ground of a battalion.

“The only kind of flank attack which can be worked out in a natural manner on the drill ground is thus that which depends upon preponderance of strength. We must in that case suppose that the enemy is much weaker than the battalion, and must extend our own front much wider than his, in order to outflank him. As the distance between the opposing forces is lessened in the course of the attack, that part of the extended fighting line which directly meets the enemy will be brought to a halt by the struggle, while the outflanking wing, which is not delayed, will continue to advance and will, if it keeps in contact with the rest of the line of battle, of itself wheel up to attack the flank. On the other hand, even if we assume that we have a superiority in number over the enemy, it will always on the drill ground appear unnatural to detach parties against the enemy's flank, since, owing to the shortness of the distances at which alone it is possible to work there, this movement must be carried out under a most effective fire from the enemy's front.”

All this shows the illusions which may take root when troops are trained under conditions

having no sort of resemblance to those of war. It is notorious that similar illusions on a larger scale not infrequently showed their appearance during the German manoeuvres, when the favourite turning movement was practised under circumstances which in war would have meant annihilation. These blunders were frequent.

“I have so often seen complicated flank movements made in peace within reach of the enemy’s fire, that I cannot consider it superfluous continually to repeat the valuable truth, that flanking movements must be carried out in such a manner that the enemy shall not at once discover them, and shall have no time to make dispositions against them, in a word, so that the enemy shall be *surprised* by them.

“If we examine examples from history where flanking movements have obtained decisive success, we shall find that they have always been the result of the use of several lines of approach, or of the early detachment of troops at such a distance from the enemy as allowed them to make use of more than one line of advance.”

As we know now, through the development of aviation, the element of *surprise* is not possible on the scale of modern operations, save

in connection with what is called a deep outflanking movement—that is a movement by an *apparently* independent army, operating many miles away but having the same objective.

An illustration of attempted outflanking by the use of several lines of approach was afforded by the movements of the Germans against the French in the Battle of the Marne. There they tried to mass on the decisive points, Montmirail and Vitry-le-François, along converging roads.

“As a fact the detaching of infantry, for the purpose of turning the enemy’s flank, has *never* been attempted in war, when the detachment so used would have been compelled to carry out its flank march under the eyes, and at the same time under the fire, of the foe.

“The difficulty of bringing a flank attack into action at the right moment is very great even in peace manœuvres. I have indeed been present at manœuvres without an enemy (that is to say with a marked enemy who could be moved as one pleased), where I have found such an attack impossible. The turning troops lost their direction, and mistook one hill for another since the ground when seen from a flank looked quite different; and then some misunder-

standings arose ; in short, the whole thing came to grief."

The real difficulty of the turning movement is that of so timing the frontal and the flank attacks that they coincide.

" Every one knows that if there is to be good hope of a favourable result, the attacks on the front and flank must work together in harmony. The enemy's front must be first occupied by a delaying action, in order to hold his attention until the flanking troops can begin their work, otherwise the foe will soon observe and crush the movement which threatens him. But as soon as the effect of the flank attack begins to be felt, the enemy must be pressed in front also with all our force, for he will be very sensitive about his flank, and would otherwise be able to move troops from his front to cover it. It has happened that the flank attack has so absorbed the enemy, that the frontal attack has finally succeeded in giving the decisive blow. The most remarkable example of this kind is the storming of the Rothe Berg in the battle of Spicheren. This position, from which the enemy kept up a murderous fire from successive rows of trenches over the ground in front, which was open to his view for a mile, appeared from

the front so impregnable that we began by pressing upon both flanks. . . . But about 3 p.m. the attention of the enemy had been more attracted to the right, and the Fusilier battalion of the 74th Regiment, followed by a company of the 39th, climbed the rocky heights and *surprised* the enemy's Chasseurs in their shelter trenches. . . . The battle was practically decided by the storming and occupation of the Rothe Berg.

“But such well-timed action in front and flank will be always very difficult to arrange. It requires the possession of a tactical eye, which can form a correct judgment as to the enemy and the ground; it requires great personal activity on the part of the officer commanding the brigade; and it requires above all a calmness of iron, which will not allow itself to be carried away, or to be induced to attack hurriedly or before the time, but which understands how to wait patiently for the right moment. Even with all these it is still possible that some unforeseen event, some accident, or some misunderstanding may ruin the effect of the turning movement. Critics will, of course, after the event express their wonder, and say: ‘But why was not the flank attack made

against such or such a point ?' 'La critique est aisée, mais l'art est difficile.' "

An example on a large scale of an attempt to carry out coincident frontal and flank attacks occurred in the present war at Cambrai. The attacks failed to coincide and were repulsed with enormous loss. The whole campaign indeed shows that the Germans entered upon it filled with theories, but with no corresponding practical skill.

On the other hand, the theories were everybody's property, and since what would be done was shrewdly inferred, the dispositions needed to upset the theory were not wanting.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GERMAN REVIVAL OF MASS ATTACKS

WHILE in Germany one school of tacticians held that attacks in close formation must, in the face of the modern rifle, be considered for the future obsolete, and that even any frontal attacks over anything save a short stretch of open ground were a doubtful tactic, another school, convinced of the superiority of German over all other troops, held that the mere moral effect of attacks by German troops in mass formation must, if supported by the effect of German shell fire, suffice in any event to put the enemy to flight.

The first, which may now be called the old school, had a waning influence. Men of what was accepted as the newer school found favour and promotion, and naturally their views leavened, or rather infected, more or less the whole body of officers.

Nobody in view of what has been pointed out in the preceding pages can now be surprised at the influence wielded by these really reactionary

tacticians. They were favoured by a combination of circumstances. Just as the idea of training camps was discounted because it had been adopted by the French, although the originator of it was Frederick the Great himself, so the practice of fighting in open order came to be discounted because it had been adopted by the British. British incompetence in military matters was accepted as a truism.

The theory at the base of the attack in mass formation was that, though the modern rifle has a so much more extended range and is so much more accurate, you would never get a body of infantry, and especially an infantry shaken by shell fire, to use it with anything like effect beyond a range of 1000 yards. When on top of the effect of shell fire came the attack in mass formation, boldly defying the power of such an arm, the probability, not to say the certainty, was that the fire of the defence would not be really effective beyond 500 yards.

Now that distance can be covered by well-drilled infantry coming on at a run in rather less than two minutes. If therefore the column of attack was formed deep enough, then even if the first two ranks or so were shot down, the rest would gain the hostile position and decide

the battle irresistibly then and there, even supposing, which was held to be improbable, that the enemy stayed in his trenches until the attack reached them.

The effect of all this was plainly seen at the beginning of the present war. At Mons and again at Cambrai, after, it was supposed, a terrific shelling had shaken the lines of the British, attacks were launched in mass formation.

A column of attack with a front a quarter-mile wide, and perhaps twenty-four ranks deep, comprising the entire infantry of an army corps and coming on behind a cloud of skirmishers, presents the spectacle of an onset which at first sight apparently no human power could arrest, much less destroy.

But, marvellous to relate, the thin double line along the British trenches refused to be impressed by it, and instead, after a bout of wild shooting, rising to run, fired with complete coolness, and with an effect which reduced the oncoming mass itself to complete demoralisation. The theory at the basis of the mass attack therefore was completely falsified. It had failed to take account of troops whose native valour was fortified by a skill which the German system could not reach.

By these ponderous and sledge-hammer tactics it was hoped to obtain effects which at the outset of the campaign would at once so shake the confidence of the enemy, and so establish the prestige of the German infantry for invincibility that the opposition could never again pull itself together.

The realities of modern war were lost sight of, or not grasped. These battles were fought on the lines of the German grand manœuvres. What happened, and must in all such instances happen when the first ranks go down, and the next succeeding ranks begin in consequence to waver, is that the momentum of the ranks behind, whose impetus it is not possible at once to stop, causes the whole formation to crowd together. Like the coaches of a train telescoped by a collision they become mixed up in a dense and widespread confusion. Thus wedged together, within short range of a deadly and rapid fire, the struggling mass becomes a huge target, until the carnage causes it to break and the survivors to rush back in a wild stampede. As Prince Kraft rightly pointed out :

“ There are situations in battle in which the hearts of men are so affected by the sense of danger, that there is an end of all manœuvring ;

they can move neither to the right nor the left, and can only advance or retire. After they had once unexpectedly come under this fire of the enemy, which they had undervalued beforehand, only a forward movement was to be thought of, and the officers, recognising this, shouted nothing but, 'Forward ! Get on !' "

Of the loss of life these tactics entail there could be no better evidence than an instance cited by Prince Kraft himself. At the battle of Sedan 300 men of the "Kaizer-Franz" regiment of the Prussian Guard, disposed in open order along the edge of the wood, defeated a column of 6000 French who tried in mass formation to cut their way out.

" Suddenly to the south of the Bois de la Garenne a thick mass of the enemy's infantry rushed out of a hollow which runs from the wood to the Fond de Givonne, and charged as hard as they could run on Haybes, and therefore directly on these two companies. I judged these masses of infantry to amount to 5000 to 6000 men, and think now that that must have been about the right number, since, according to the French account, this must have been the left wing of Wimpffen's despairing attempt to break out (Grandchamp's division). The enemy's masses

of infantry, running up in deep columns, fired incessantly as they ran with their rifles held horizontally at the hip, and thus covered themselves with a cloud of smoke. You could distinctly see with a field-glass how the men loaded and fired as they ran without raising their rifles to the 'present.' To the naked eye the mass looked like a gigantic advancing heap, blue above (the tunics), gray in the middle (the smoke), under which the red trousers and the struggling legs showed with a sort of trembling movement. Though I gave the order as quickly as possible to all the batteries of my line of artillery (90 guns) to open a rapid fire on the enemy's masses of attack, I could not help feeling very anxious about the two companies of the 'Franz' regiment which lay on the other side of the valley of the Givonne, for if the enemy's masses succeeded in getting to within 200 paces of them, I should not be able to fire any longer with my guns at the head of the attack, on account of the danger of hitting our own infantry.

"I had reason indeed to be nervous. Though the shells, striking and bursting in the midst of the thick masses of men, wrought horrible destruction, and threw them into confused heaps in which smoke and dust were mingled with the

colours of the uniforms, while above them men's bodies and limbs were hurled up into the air by the explosions, the mass still came on nearer and nearer, for the enemy fought with the courage of despair. The moment soon came when I was compelled to order the fire on the head of the column to cease. This head broke loose from the mass, and charged in on the companies.

“In contrast to the thick smoke which was made by the rapid fire of the French, no fire could be seen to proceed from our companies. I turned my field-glass on them, and then at last saw here and there the puff of a discharged rifle ; the whole line of skirmishers lay flat on the ground, their rifles at their shoulders and their sights on the target. Captain von C. only, walking up and down, moved along his line of skirmishers, and (as he told me afterwards), exhorted his men to aim quietly and shoot slowly. But each bullet struck down one of the advancing enemy ; the number of those who drew near to the skirmishing line grew less and less ; a few even reached the line, and there met with their fate at the muzzles of the rifles, for two of our men lie there bayoneted through the back from above. But the whole attack, which was commenced with such boldness, died

away. Only a few survivors turned to fly, and were shot down by the pursuing fire of the infantry. The whole mass was destroyed in the space of ten minutes ! On the other hand, the entire ' Kaiser-Franz ' regiment lost during the whole of the battle of Sedan only two officers and eighty men. Of this loss only a very small proportion was incurred by these two companies during the short episode which I have related. So great is the superiority of the well-aimed, well-directed, and good individual fire of troops, who have been correctly trained in detail, over shock tactics in mass-formation ! It is not the offensive, as such, which has lost all use and value owing to the system of instruction and the perfection of firearms, but such shock tactics in mass-formation !

“ A mass-formation was employed by that force which possessed far the better infantry arm ; and yet it could not stand against the inferior weapon, even though the proportion of numbers was 6000 to 300 ! Granted that the 300 were supported by an effective fire of artillery, and that this destroyed half of the column of attack, yet the odds will be still 3000 to 300, or ten to one. This superiority of individual fire on the defensive over mass-formations in the offen-

sive must have increased since the infantry weapon has been yet more improved.

“It is easy to understand how hard it is for infantry officers who have grown old and grey in the service to give up their dear old fighting formations. But such formations as those of Frederick the Great, who personally led on to the storm his battalions deployed in close order with bands playing and colours flying, halting only at 100 paces from the enemy to fire a volley, are no longer possible in these days of Mauser rifles. The movement also, by which a brigade of six battalions, while the first line of three battalions fired volleys in line, sent forward its second line in columns of attack through the intervals in order that they might charge in with the bayonet, is no longer suitable to the present day. New inventions entail changes, and the old movements which we have loved pass away like dreams. We must make up our minds to this.”

This enables us to judge of what must have been the losses of the Germans when in turn they during this war employed the same mass-formations against the British lines, but on a far greater scale.

Learning by bitter experience the reckless

extravagance of such attacks directed against expert shots they employed in the Battle of the Aisne the alternative of night attacks, partly no doubt because they could not get their troops to face further attacks in mass during daylight, and partly also because of the belief that darkness must neutralise the danger of marksmanship.

“ So also we must acknowledge that the charm of a well-dressed advancing column of attack (battalion column on the centre companies), as it moved in step to the tap of the drums, is gone for ever, since it must lead to the destruction of the assailants. Even the term ‘ column of attack ’ has been changed in the last regulations into ‘ column on the centre ’; a proof how entirely we have renounced any idea of using the old column of attack within the zone of fire. Even the use of the smaller company column has been to some extent given up within the zone of very effective fire. In nine cases out of ten it will serve only to feed the fighting lines of skirmishers, and it will but rarely happen that a closed formed company column will be brought up into the front fighting line to work out the decisive struggle. Seldom indeed; but its effect will then certainly *be decisive*. Thus it

may be used by night, when the darkness will diminish the effect of arms of precision, or if smoke or their own loss has physically or morally blinded the eyes of the defenders, or if the ground affords cover to the advance of company columns which may take the enemy by surprise. But the essential point of infantry action will always be the individual action in the fire-fight, and that infantry will gain a decisive superiority which has understood how to train each individual man so that he can make the best possible use of his rifle, and has learnt to follow the signs, the orders, and the example of his leaders. For of what use is an effective fire, if it is not carefully directed on the most important point? The real difficulty of the training lies in teaching the men to steadily follow the directions of their leader, in spite of the (so-called) loose order, and to preserve discipline. This combination of discipline with individual action was the cause of the superiority of the German infantry in 1870-71, and will make any infantry superior to that of the enemy, if the latter has not attained to the same standard.

“ If we look closely into the phases of our battles, we shall acknowledge that our infantry, especially when they met the enemy for the first

time, were exposed to his fire in columns which were at once too strong and too deep, and that this was the principal cause of the heavy losses in the earlier battles."

Every word of this is borne out by the experience of the present war, with the exception that a night attack made against cool and resolute and skilful troops does not of necessity greatly diminish the effect of rifle fire. Not only at the present time has the use of smokeless powder and magazine rifles falsified such a conclusion, but it has apparently been forgotten that if the troops attacked by night cannot see so far, the troops attacking cannot in darkness advance so rapidly. Practically therefore the one disadvantage is offset by the other.

In place of seeing the old column of attack done away with we have seen it still employed as though the modern rifle and the modern rifleman did not exist, and in the face of both warning and experience. Could there be a more conclusive proof of the corrosion which the German military system has undergone ?

CHAPTER XIV

INFLUENCE OF MODERN ARMS ON TACTICS

THE whole trend of *modern* tactics goes to emphasise the importance of individual training. This, indeed, must to anyone who will consider it candidly appear an inevitable consequence of the improvements in arms of precision. The greater range and accuracy of present-day guns and the present-day rifle have, it may be said, trebled both the offensive and the defensive power of an army as compared with an equal body of troops even so comparatively recent as forty-four years ago. But unless those troops have received a training designed to give effect to such modern arms, the greater offensive and defensive power remains *potential* only. What that means is that taking two armies of equal numbers, the one that has been trained to give full effect to modern arms may in reality exert three times the effective strength of the other. If, further, the one be handled on lines which

recognise the power and effect of modern arms, and the other be not, the superiority on the one side becomes overwhelming. Nor can disparity of numbers on the side of the less skilful army less skilfully led altogether redress the balance. For the vaster numbers are more difficult to control, and though the effect of numbers may avoid an otherwise crushing and certain defeat, yet the more skilful army, even against numbers, will contrive to render any advantage obtained by numbers a Pyrrhic victory.

This has been well illustrated in the present campaign by the encounters between British and German forces. In its modernised form the main strength of the British Army has been rightly placed in a skilful and intrepid infantry, not only trained on the individual principle, but equally trained in field tactics keeping war conditions steadily in view, both to apply its skill and to co-operate practically with the other arms. Handled by generals who appreciate and are able to apply the principles of modernised tactics, the military strength of such a force is enormous.

Indeed, it is open to doubt if the comparatively imperfect training of masses of men on the Scharnhorst plan is likely, apart altogether

from the political considerations, associated with disarmament, in any event to survive the experiences of the war now in progress. The attempt has been made in the German Army to solve this problem of really modern and complete training by limiting it to crack troops, among whom may be included not only the Prussian Guard and the Jaeger regiments, as well as some favoured corps of the Saxon Army, but most of the artillery and cavalry. But an army of that kind, despite its seemingly imposing mass, is not a solid structure like an army built round a thoroughly trained body of infantry. Besides, the tradition of what may be called mass training owing to the necessity of having year by year to handle huge bodies of recruits, many of them with neither taste nor aptitude for the soldier's calling, must affect even the crack corps.

The habit which the Scharnhorst plan has induced in Europe of reckoning and comparing the strength of armies by arithmetic, is from the military standpoint a bad habit. The production of *soldiers* by millions was never a possibility. In view of what is demanded of the modern soldier by the conditions of modern war it is less a possibility than ever.

To what an extent realities may be lost sight of is proved by this further criticism of Prince Kraft :

“There are some commanders of brigades who even delight in practising their entire brigades in the manual (bayonet) exercise. This is merely something to look at, without tactical value, and therefore a waste of time, which is so much the more to be deprecated as there are seldom more than four days available for the brigade exercises. Moreover, practising the manual exercise in brigade injures discipline, since the brigade commander cannot attend to every motion of every man, while the junior officers dare not do anything or even look after their own men. The men, therefore, in the rear rank do the exercise badly, since they know that they will not be noticed.”

In the modern tactic of attack on an entrenched position the object is to give the enemy so many different moving targets to aim at that he is kept fully occupied. At the same time each of those targets is itself a point of the attack. Hence until the attack closes for the final rush the enemy has all his work cut out. But this needs expert marksmanship, and, to combine cohesion with elasticity, it calls for

alertness and steadiness. Evidently confidence in carrying out such tactics must be acquired by practice.

On the other hand, there is the tactic of defence combined with the counter-attack. Nearly all pitched battles under present-day conditions resolve themselves into attacks upon and defences of entrenched positions. The most notable probably of all such battles is that of the Aisne. It signalised a complete change in German tactics. At the same time it showed the risks of taking up unaccustomed tactics in a hurry. Light is thrown upon it by this passage :

“In order to carry out all counter-attacks with the greatest possible effect, we must, when we take up a position, occupy the front with as thin a line of infantry as possible, and must echelon as large reserves as possible in rear of each flank. Since we are now able to throw up shelter trenches with the spades of the infantry in a shorter time than was formerly the case, we shall in most cases be able to spare yet more men from the front, and these we shall hand over to the reserve. But in connection with shelter trenches there is one point which I must mention, for it has frequently annoyed me very

much at the manœuvres. I do not know why it is, but, great as is the objection of the German soldier to making trenches in the ground and to occupying a defensive position, and infinitely as he prefers to be let go in action and to strike a direct blow, when once shelter trenches have been made they exercise a marvellous attraction. How often at the manœuvres do we see a rush made into the shelter trenches, so that they get quite filled up, and the men at last lie so close together in them—even if they do not lie one on the top of the other—that each of them prevents the other from firing. Moreover, the trench is often so narrow and so shallow that the cover which it affords is a mere illusion, and at least the feet of the men stick up in rear and serve as a sort of butt for the bullets which miss their heads. Unless it be insisted on that the shelter trenches shall be made sufficiently wide and deep, the men get an entirely false idea as to their value. The same is the case when too many men are crowded into the trenches.

“Again, I must admit that many false notions arise from peace manœuvres, for the reason that there are then no losses in action, and there is always a temptation to crowd up

the shelter trenches along the front, as soon as it becomes necessary to make use of the supports at the moment of the crisis ; but these supports, in a real action, would be employed in replacing the casualities which occur, and in keeping up, in spite of such losses, the full power of fire of the shelter trenches. For in real work the enemy's bullets will take very good care that our lines are not too crowded.

“ When I picture to myself a well-conducted fire-fight carried on from a shelter trench, I think that each man (having his pack on the ground by his side, so that he may use the cartridges out of it) must occupy two paces of front, if he is to be comfortable and to be able to shoot his best. No shelter trench ought to have more than one man to every two paces. Thus 500 men will occupy a front of 1000 paces, and a battalion therefore, at full war strength, will be sufficient for from 800 to 1000 paces of shelter trench, for which it will supply the firing line and the necessary supports immediately in rear. I therefore think that if a brigade is to occupy a line of shelter trenches from 1600 to 2000 paces in length (about a mile), I should divide this line into two halves, occupy each half with one battalion (taking one from each

regiment), and should echelon the other two battalions of each regiment in rear of either wing, as a reserve, placing them so that they overlapped the flanks."

These were in outline the German tactics on the Aisne, but the overcrowding of the trenches led to very heavy casualties, while the counter-attacks, though made mostly at night, continued generally to be made in mass formations.

The view that the modern rifle and the training of infantry founded upon it has most affected present-day tactics may at first sight appear open to dispute. At the present moment there exists a general belief that the now decisive and distinguishing feature of battles lies in the artillery.

To assert that artillery has not exerted a deep influence on tactics would, as already observed, be palpably untrue. The necessity largely of obtaining cover from artillery fire has made entrenchment work a part of practically every present-day battle. The soldier's entrenching tool is as essential to him as his rifle.

The outstanding fact of artillery is its range. Artillery makes it possible to attack hostile

positions far beyond the effective range of the most expert body of riflemen. On the other hand artillery correspondingly widens the reach of the defence. Artillery may be called the long arm of the army.

A powerful and expert artillery both paves the way for the infantry attack and conversely may so shake and confuse such an attack as to render it abortive.

In modern war the artilleryman has to handle weapons of high power, and of great precision. The artillery officer must manage his guns and keep them fit, much as the cavalryman cares for the fitness of his horse. He has to calculate heights and distances with quickness and certainty; and have kinetics and trigonometry at his fingers' ends. Every artillery officer is provided with tables to aid his calculations, but these can only cover a given number of stated distances. For intermediate points he has to rely upon his knowledge and use of the Differential Calculus.

All this he learns at the School of Gunnery. In the British, French, and Russian Armies gunnery has, more especially in recent years, been carefully and scientifically studied. In the Russian Army, more especially, the artillery

arm has tended to attract the intellectual *élite*. The French artillery service is brilliant, and the British marked by solid excellence.

In all three armies great attention has been paid to the training of non-commissioned officers, so that in the event of necessity they may take command. The introduction of smokeless powder has increased the rapidity of the fire of field guns from three to thirty rounds a minute, although nearly a dozen successive and connected acts must be carried out by the gun team for every shot fired. An interval of only two seconds between each shot shows the dexterity it is possible to reach by discipline, each man doing his allotted part.

In the Russian Army every member of the team is taught all these acts. In practice, that is to say, the men change about successively, until each can, if need be, fill the place of any one of the others. Among the men who guard the guns there are in all modern armies the trained reserves destined to fill the gaps.

Undeniably one reason for the keenness to improve guns and gunnery has been to keep pace with the Germans. Artillery is the Arm in which the Germans have reached real efficiency. In the war of 1866 against Austria

the Prussian guns were inferior both in number and in pattern. The fifteen batteries, of which Prussian artillery regiments then consisted, were too many for one commanding officer properly to direct. Under the influence of General von Hindersin the artillery was reformed from top to bottom. All the old smooth-bore guns were replaced by rifled ordnance. The number of batteries in a regiment was reduced from fifteen to seven. There was a tendency to look rather at the superficial smartness of a gun team in working a gun rather than at their power to hit the target ; at the number of shots fired, rather than at the number of hits made. Hindersin weeded that out with severity. The effect was seen in the war against France. Since then the tradition has obtained, certainly in Germany, that the German artillery had no equal.

This tradition fortified the tendency to consider artillery as the predominant Arm. The tendency is unsound. If the present war has taught no other lesson it has certainly taught that.

Important as artillery is, there must clearly be a radical difference between the tactics in which infantry is looked upon as adjunct to

artillery, and those in which artillery is employed as an aid to infantry. The difference sums up broadly the distinction between modern German and modern British, or it may be said modern non-German, tactics.

Apply a plain common-sense test. As compared with the old musket the modern rifle has *ten times* as great an *effective* range. By effective range is meant not that within which a rifle-shot may prove fatal, that is known as the efficiency range, but the range within which a given proportion of shots may with certainty be counted upon as hits. The effective range has extended from 200 to 2000 yards. But the practical rapidity of fire is also ten times as great. It follows that, as compared with the old musket, the modern rifle is, potentially, at any rate, *one hundred times* more deadly.

Now clearly this potential power of the rifle depends on the kind of man who is put behind it. If the man behind the rifle is expert, such a weapon gives him a crushing superiority over the man who is less expert. Nobody, therefore, who reflects upon the matter can be surprised to find expert infantry prevailing over larger numbers of an expert infantry ; nor to find that, despite the development of modern artillery,

the rifle still causes something like four-fifths of the casualties in battle.

That within its effective range the rifle, skilfully used, is far more deadly than field guns skilfully used, may be simply demonstrated.

Take the example of a line of ten field batteries comprising sixty guns. Such a line would be as nearly as possible 1200 yards in length. Now in a length of 1200 yards 500 expert riflemen may be disposed in open order. Suppose the riflemen and the guns to be opposing each other at a distance of 1000 yards, which is the more likely to prevail ?

On the one hand the guns would be "searching" the positions of the riflemen with all their energy. On the other, the riflemen would be picking off the gunners and gun teams. Assuming the riflemen on the one side and the gunners on the other to be alike cool and expert shots, it is certain that the gunners would practically all at that range be shot down within two minutes.

At first sight this conclusion seems startling, and few may think it possible that such a force of infantry, even with first-rate cover, could withstand such a weight of guns. But assuming the guns to be at this range in view, and

therefore using direct fire, the riflemen by aiming obliquely could explode the batteries, and thus largely neutralise the effect of the gun shields.

It is putting the thing high to say that within that time the guns under such conditions might fire thirty rounds each, or a total of 1800 shells, and those, despite the cover taken by the riflemen and their open order, would undoubtedly kill or injure a large proportion of the total opposing force, possibly 200 out of the 500. But as against that the riflemen could fire off within the two minutes a possible 20,000 shots, which for the artillery would mean annihilation.

The guns, therefore, would be put out of action and in danger of capture ; the infantry would not.

At a range of 1000 yards the odds consequently are all on the side of the rifle, and they increase as the range is shortened.

Conversely, however, as the range is lengthened the odds pass to the side of the guns. We may say that at 1500 yards the chances are somewhere near equal. At 2000 yards the guns would have decidedly the best of it ; at 3000 yards they would have it all their own way.

But, however expert the gunnery, the effect must, as with the rifle, decrease as the range extends. No bombardment ever does at 10,000 yards the damage done at 5000.

The tactics which rely primarily on guns are tactics of long-range hitting. Reliance is placed on the expertness and power of the artillery, keeping well beyond rifle range, both to shake the enemy and to render counter-attack by his infantry difficult. At the same time, beyond range both of his infantry and of his guns, a force is detached to operate, if possible, against one or other flank of his position. In conjunction with that attack the guns operating against his front are pushed forward. Their effect both on front and flank increasing as they are moved in, the assumption is that by the time they have been pushed within the range practicable for infantry attack, say 2000 or 2500 yards, the enemy will have been so demoralised that effective resistance to the infantry attack will be impossible.

As already shown, flank movements are in practice far from easy, and, more especially if undertaken on the vast scale of the battles in the present war, may be subject to a variety of hitches and impediments, throwing a tactical

scheme arranged upon a time-table out of gear.

But it is evident both that these tactics do not sufficiently take into account the odds on the power of the rifle which grow more and more as the hostile lines close for the decisive clash, and that they represent a laborious and expensive manner of trying to achieve what, if the infantry be inferior, cannot become a victory.

Now consider, by contrast, the tactics which regard artillery as an aid to infantry. On the offensive they may be in outline much the same, but with the vital difference that when the attack is pushed home the deadly power of the rifle takes up the effect from the point to which it has been brought by the guns at their maximum. Moreover, supported in this way by the power of the rifle, a turning movement is more likely to reach its objective without serious checks.

On the defensive such a tactic seizes upon outlying positions, such as villages, or naturally defensive points which break the force by splitting up the unity of the attack, for supported by guns behind them such positions can be defended by expert riflemen with immense

effect and obstinacy. An example of this was afforded at the battle of Cambrai in the defence of Landrecies by a brigade of the Guards, who held at bay a whole German army corps.

The attack is thus seriously weakened, for unity is an essential feature of it. In any event at the decisive point the power of the attacking artillery is off-set and more than cancelled by the still greater power of the rifle, which, it should be remembered, is at its maximum on the very line of the defensive trenches.

Hence both on the offensive and on the defensive the tactics which look to the infantry as the ultimately master Arm have a decided superiority.

Why, if all this is so obvious, have German military men, who are not all by any means unintelligent, come to adopt what has proved the more unsound conclusion? The best answer to that question is afforded by this passage from Prince Kraft's "Letters" dealing with the comparative effects of infantry and artillery fire :

"The results of target practice in peace may tempt us to trust great fallacies. For when fighting in earnest matters take quite another form. In the first place, the ignorance of the

range materially affects the value of fire, especially as regards infantry at ranges at which the trajectory of the bullet is above the height of a man. It is certainly laid down that the range is to be tested, but even at known ranges and in peace the observation of infantry fire is very untrustworthy.

“ I once succeeded, by making an arrangement with some artillery who were carrying out their practice, in giving both arms some idea as to the proportional effect of the fire of each, at ranges which for the infantry were long, but which were unknown to either ; with this object I made the infantry and the artillery carry out their practice from the same spot at the same targets. A battery of six guns fired first at a target representing a company extended in skirmishing order, and then on one representing six guns. A company of infantry fired at the same time, at the same targets, but in reverse order. The range was unknown to the troops, and was between 1100 and 1200 yards. The elevation and the description of fire (in the case of the artillery the nature of projectile also) were left entirely to the discretion of the captains. The result was very striking. The battery obtained 30 times as many hits on

the infantry target, and 100 times as many on the artillery target as the infantry. Care was taken, as this is a most important point, that the time during which the fire continued, the expense and the total weight of ammunition were the same for both arms. From this practice I drew the conclusion that we should in war commit a fault leading to a colossal waste of ammunition, by allowing infantry to open fire at from 1100 to 1200 yards, if there were by any chance artillery available for the desired duty.

“ If we suppose a combat of infantry against artillery, the result will be yet more favourable to the latter, since the number of rifles will diminish as it goes on owing to the losses of the infantry, while the artillery will still have all six guns in action, even though some of the men and horses have fallen.

“ The result will be quite the other way as soon as the troops get nearer to the target. The effect of the fire of artillery does not increase at ranges shorter than 1100 or 1200 yards, since this is the distance at which every shot tells and their effect is annihilating. On the other hand, the effect of the fire of infantry increases at every step which brings them nearer to their target.

“ It follows from what has been said above that the effect of infantry fire first bears comparison with that of artillery at a range of 500 yards, and will not be equal to it before between 330 and 220 yards.

“ If we take into account the excitement of action the comparison will be yet more unfavourable for the infantry, since this excitement will make the hand shake which holds the rifle, while the gun feels nothing of it. It is certainly true that this excitement affects the sight of many a laying number, and leads also to other mistakes in the service of the guns. Some batteries which fought very long and very bravely at the battle of Königgrätz, noticed that after a long-continued fire their guns shot from 300 to 400 paces too short, and this fact they attributed to the fouling of the bore by the enormous expenditure of ammunition. Our experts puzzled their brains over this fact, for in the trials which had been made in peace as to the effects of the duration of fire no such result had been observed ; or, if it had, it was of so small extent as to be not worth mention, and had certainly never been so marked. I strongly suspect that the laying numbers, in the excitement of the action, did

not look to their tangent scales after each shot, and that these slipped down owing to the shake given by the discharge. We noticed no such effect of the fouling of the bore in my batteries. But I certainly observed in them also that, when the effect of the enemy's shell became very severe, the guns were very badly laid and were even fired without being laid; and I had to take very strong measures in order to reintroduce a quiet and regular service of the guns. This is possible in the case of artillery, but in the case of infantry the aiming of the men, especially in a hot action, is almost entirely beyond control."

These conclusions are based on the assumption that it is not practically possible to make any considerable body of infantry into fairly expert shots, and that in any event in the excitement of battle their shooting will become wild to a greater extent than that of gunners. That assumption, in the case of the German Army, has turned out not far from the truth. But if it is inapplicable to a body of infantry trained on other lines, then the conclusions fall to the ground, and with them the whole scheme of tactics of which they form the foundation.

This principle of regarding the infantry as

the primary arm, a principle confirmed by recent experience, being conceded, it becomes manifest that in the making of a modern army few things are more essential than that artillery and infantry should learn practically to co-operate together. They have to learn not to get in each other's way, or in military phrase, not to "mask" each other, a matter which, when great bodies of troops have to be handled, is not so easy as it sounds. Acting with bodies of infantry, artillery need practice in finding the positions most effective for attack or for defence which leave the infantry free to advance or to retire.

Conversely, to quote again a sound passage, on this subject, from Prince Kraft :

"Infantry still more need practice in acting in harmony with their artillery. For when the artillery have once come into action and have opened fire, it is not wise to disturb them on account of the infantry, or to order a change of position. For the artillery have then to a certain extent become stable. Artillery which have taken up a specified position, have ranged themselves there, and know the different distances to various points, must not be compelled to unnecessarily change their position,

since in a new position a certain amount of time is always lost, while the artillery are ranging themselves and developing the full effect of which they are capable. Again, it is very difficult for the infantry who are advancing from their original position against the enemy, and who naturally have their attention principally fixed upon that enemy, to pay attention to their own artillery in order not to mask their fire ; for they must thus watch at once the enemy who threatens them and the artillery which they have passed. In this case also skill and practice are required in order to move the infantry from the proper position in the right direction. If any mistake has been made in this matter at first, it is difficult to repair it, owing to the slowness with which infantry move ; while the time which will be required for such a change will entail very considerable loss. In theory we can lay down that, when the firing lines threaten to mask the artillery, the latter shall send word to the infantry to incline away from them. This is easily said, and in manœuvres is easily done. But if you once try in battle to ride forward from the flank of the artillery line which is in action, up to the line of skirmishers which is also fighting,

you will acknowledge that it can seldom be possible to do so.

“It is thus absolutely necessary that the infantry be practised and skilled in advancing past their artillery and against the enemy without masking the former. Though infantry can stand at a certain distance in front of their artillery, even when the latter are firing, and though under certain circumstances it is impossible to avoid firing over our own infantry ; yet, as I have also written before, infantry which are lying down in front of their own artillery run a considerable risk.

“Other circumstances again plead in favour of attaching artillery to infantry as often as possible. . . . The infantry, as they pass by the artillery in their advance, should inquire the range from the latter, who will have carefully found it, and how a really effective fire from the infantry depends upon this. But this must be made habitual at the exercises, and must be considered as a matter of course ; it will otherwise be neglected at the manœuvres, owing to the great hurry which usually exists there, and will then be certainly neglected in war also.

“After the artillery of the attack has got the

upper hand of that of the defence in the artillery duel at the longer ranges, the infantry advances in the formation for attack, while the assailant's artillery moves in two echelons, to within about 2200 yards of the object of attack. Under cover of the fire of this artillery the infantry advance, without firing, until the foremost line of skirmishers is, if possible, from 440 to 550 yards from the object of attack ; they there establish themselves and open fire. The moment has now come when the artillery, under cover of the infantry fire, and advancing in echelon (if indeed they have not done so already), may push on in company with their infantry to within 1100 or 1200 yards, with the object, in combination with the fire of the latter, of so beating down the enemy that a farther advance and the final assault may become possible to the infantry. But a system of this kind, implying as it does a mutual understanding and perfect machinery, must be constantly practised ; otherwise it cannot succeed before the enemy. And it must, moreover, be practised, so that the principles of it may be ingrained in the minds of those who take a part in it ; for at the manœuvres the conditions of ground cause so many modifications of this system that it will,

owing to these variations, be no longer possible to recognise general principles."

All that goes to prove the need for the training of *units* on practical lines ; and the value of tactics founded on the experience of practical training.

CHAPTER XV

THE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS IN WAR

THE failure of the German military system in a campaign long and carefully prepared for, and with all the advantages arising from that preparation, is one of the greatest as well as one of the most apparently surprising events in history. But it will have been gathered from the foregoing pages that that failure is due to no accidental causes. If the German military system had been in fact superior to those opposed to it, then the result must have been even more decisively that which attended the campaigns of Frederick the Great in the Seven Years' War, for while Frederick's system *was* superior his resources, measured against those of his enemies, were, in comparison with the resources of the German Empire of to-day, almost absurdly slender.

Now the Prussian military system—for the system of modern Germany is that of Prussia—has been instructive to military men in other

countries both positively and negatively, and in recent times more negatively than positively. In other words, while the defects of the German Army have been realised and avoided, its good points have been adopted, and those responsible for the German Army having declined conversely to learn and copy the ideas adopted elsewhere, the result has been the creation by other powers of armies better than that which had passed as the model.

The comparative study just sketched out shows to what extent the opinions of Prince Kraft as a critic of the German system were justified, and it illustrates incidentally to what success or failure in modern war is due.

For success in war on land always results from superior military strength combined with superior skill in using it. Of all heresies regarding military operations, the worst, as well as the most widespread, is the heresy of supposing that the "fortune of war" is wholly adventitious. The surprises of war arise from miscalculations ; from elements of military strength and skill not taken into account ; from misapplication of that strength. If the battle is not always on the side of numbers it is because numbers, though a necessary part of strength,

are by no means the whole. Skill being an essential of military power, the well-known saying, for example, that Napoleon was worth an Army Corps, was literally true. On the other hand, the skill of a great commander is but the summation of the skill of well-trained troops. The greatest military genius could not obtain from an armed but uninstructed mob the results which would under the same lead be given by even one-tenth the number of skilful troops. It amounts to the same thing as asking a great performer on the violin to extract soul-stirring melody from disconnected chips and catgut. There must be both the instrument and the artist to ensure the result.

Among modern armies the British and the German are respectively the leading examplars, the one of the professional, the other of the conscriptionist system. Their basis is consequently different, and that difference of basis it has been shown affects all through their training and their tactics. Probably the only way definitely to decide the controversy between the relative value of the one principle and the other is to observe their relative effects alike in training and in actual operations.

One grave mistake commonly made in this

connection is that of supposing that the change from a professional to a conscriptionist basis is a change merely affecting numbers. It is altogether more radical, and therefore a much graver decision than would on the surface appear. So far in this matter our national failing has not been primarily the failure to adopt conscription, but the mistake of misunderstanding and underestimating the military profession.

From that mistake arises the tendency to confuse military with political considerations. Taking up the purely *military* standpoint the superiority under modern conditions of the homogeneous professional army over an army in the partly professional, partly non-professional and compulsory Scharnhorst plan cannot be gainsaid. It ought not to be forgotten that Prussia adopted the Scharnhorst plan for *political* reasons. Given a perfectly free choice on merely military grounds it is inconceivable that the mixed army could be preferred to the homogeneous army. The Scharnhorst plan was an expedient for getting over the limitation imposed by Napoleon on Prussia's professional army. The plan was adopted from necessity. No choice presented itself. True the belief

arose that the plan was superior, but that belief has not stood the test of recent experience. Its inherent defects and practical difficulties show why.

The foundation then of success in modern war on land is the possession of a sound military system, and of an army, trained in accordance with that system and with its principles. The modern British military system is undoubtedly sound, and the modern British Army, taking it all through, is the best in proportion to its numbers in Europe. How difficult it is to create such an army must by this be evident. Having studied that difficulty we are able to estimate the wisdom of entrusting the control of our War Office at a time of national necessity to a great soldier ; and something of the magnitude of the task which that great soldier has cheerfully faced of turning the multitude of our recruits, admirable as material, into armies. None but soldiers can fully realise the immensity of the public service now being rendered by Earl Kitchener. It is advisable, none the less, that the national gratitude should be intelligent as well as sincere.

When we have been urged, as we sometimes have been, to abandon the distinctive principle

on which the British Army is now based, it has commonly been forgotten that our position among powers is quite peculiar. It is not merely that we are a group of islands, but the fact that these islands constitute a great fortress, and moreover a fortress which, with the one exception of Japan, is of a unique kind. Much has been heard during this war of the valuelessness of fortifications in the face of siege artillery of vast calibre turned out from the works of Krupps. But the weak point of such land defences is that they form fixed targets. It would be quite another matter if the defences could be moved about at will. But that is exactly the feature of the defences of an island fortress. Its ships, as its defences, can be concentrated at any point or points where attack threatens. It is evident that the strength of such a fortress is beyond all comparison greater than any fortress dependent on land defences. Moreover, the attack upon it must be made under exactly the same conditions as the defence.

It will have been gathered how vitally real military strength depends not only on the soundness or unsoundness of foundation principle, but on the application of the principle

in a practical scheme of training so as to secure in war that balance between the use and co-operation of the several "Arms" which is in turn the foundation of skilful tactics.

With regard to tactics, the opinion has sometimes been expressed that the value of cavalry in modern war must be greatly reduced, and that the "shock" tactics of cavalry would be found out of date. Experience during the present war has not confirmed those views. Invaluable lessons were derived from South Africa in the training of the British cavalry.

Like the battalion, the squadron has to learn a series of changes in form and for the same reason. The shock tactics of the cavalry charge, particularly, if pushed home with the support of horse artillery and followed up by infantry are still important, and more especially if contending bodies of troops are in movement, as during a general advance or retirement in the open.

In spite of the fact that against entrenched positions cavalry are useless, the power of movement is so essential to successful campaigning that cavalry, in screening an advance or in covering a retirement, remain more than ever an essential arm. They are not less essential

in heading off or rounding up a hostile force ; in protecting or raiding lines of communication ; in clearing the way for the movement of their own side's guns, or in embarrassing the movements of the enemy's batteries.

As scouts, too, cavalry remain indispensable. The cavalryman must be alert and observant ; not expert merely with sabre or lance, carbine or pistol, as the case may be, but possess a developed sense of locality, and an eye for topography. To the extent to which mass formations of infantry and fighting in the open disappear, the shock tactics of cavalry must disappear also ; but the uses of a body of highly mobile troops are on the whole wider now than at any former period. That opinion is held by no less an authority than Field-Marshal Sir John French.

If sound tactics have become more than ever important so, too, has sound and capable strategy. The rapidity of present-day communication, and the facility for the transport of masses of troops and of vast supplies by railway, have enabled operations to be undertaken on a gigantic scale. But it is precisely in operations on a gigantic scale that skilful strategy tells. Skilful strategy has

become all the more necessary since aviation has largely eliminated from movements the element of surprise. Under existing conditions to rely upon concealing a movement of any magnitude is futile. The one element of surprise still remaining, and an element all the more effective in proportion to the magnitude of the movements involved, is the surprise arising from the real purpose or objective of the movement. It is as much open to the able strategist as ever to lead the enemy to infer that he intends one thing when he intends quite another. Given a sound military system and an efficient army, competently led, skill in strategy must decide a war.

Let it be remembered that the *primary* object of any military campaign is to defeat and, if possible, to destroy opposing armies, and that until that is accomplished the campaign is not decided. To complicate with and much more to subordinate this primary object to political objects, or assumed moral effects, such as the taking of this or of that place, or the reaching of this or of that point, when such movements do not advance the primary object, is of all varieties of bad strategy probably the worst. The present German campaign in the

western theatre of war affords an example of false military moves arising out of such a confusion of distinct objects. The campaign which can be retrieved after even one serious false move is an exception extremely rare.

Never were intellect on war and military efficiency more decisive than now. Since modern arms add to the power of skilful strategy and tactics, and heighten the effect of training, it is more than ever unsound to confuse numbers with force. Every master of the science of war from Clausewitz to the present day has insisted that while success in practice rests upon superiority of theory, the test of a superior theory is simplicity. From the ancient Persian Empire until to-day the estimation of armies by the standard of bulk alone has proved fatal to those who relied upon it.

THE END

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW

AN INITIAL FINE OF 25 CENTS

WILL BE ASSESSED FOR FAILURE TO RETURN
THIS BOOK ON THE DATE DUE. THE PENALTY
WILL INCREASE TO 50 CENTS ON THE FOURTH
DAY AND TO \$1.00 ON THE SEVENTH DAY
OVERDUE.

OCT 7 1988
ICLF (N)
RECEIVED

OCT 21 '68 - 10 AM

AUG 4 1940

19 JAN 56 GC

JAN 5 1956 LU

26 Jan '56 CT

JAN 12 1956 LU

JAN 12 1956 LU

20 JAN 1956 LU

REC'D LD

AUG 4 '64 - 4 PM

YB 03968

330940

Dana

1852

D.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

